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Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Translation

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Abstract
This essay looks at how Ricoeur's hermeneutics functions as both philosophy *of* translation and philosophy *as* translation. It starts with a overview of Ricoeur's theories in the light of the history of the philosophy of translation and shows how he, following in the footsteps of Gadamer, understands the act of translation as an art of negotiating and mediating between Self and Other. It then goes on to explore the hermeneutic model of translation, advanced in Ricoeur's later work, in terms of three main paradigms: linguistic, ontological and ethical. The essay concludes with a discussion of the crucial role played by translation in hospitality, pluralism and pardon.

Keywords
hermeneutics, translation, ethics, memory, hospitality

Translation has been a central feature of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, though it was not until his later years that he made it an explicit theme of his work. Well before Ricoeur actually thematized the subject, the art of translation was something he actually *performed* in his philosophical practice. Ricoeur was an inveterate mediator, someone who navigated and negotiated transits between rival positions. He was, it could be argued, unequaled as a diplomat of philosophical exchange, forever finding a point of commerce—if not always resolution—between ostensibly irreconcilable viewpoints. Consider his endless brokering and commuting between Continental and Anglo-Saxon thought at the most general level. Then, within the Continental tradition more specifically, between existentialism and structuralism; between hermeneutics and Critical Theory; between phenomenology and the human sciences; between Freudian psychoanalysis and Hegelian dialectics; between literary theory and the philosophy of religion; between historical understanding (*Verstehen*) and scientific explanation (*Erklären*); between psychology and neuro-science; between ethics and politics, and so on. And consider, finally, his many acts of mediating translation *within* hermeneutics itself between romantic hermeneutics (from

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Schleiermacher and Dilthey) and critical or radical hermeneutics (developed by Habermas and Derrida, respectively)

What is remarkable in all these critical intercessions is that Ricoeur never ceased to respect both adversarial partners in the exchange. He deftly transmuted conflict into conversation without ever sacrificing depth of conviction or acuity of evaluation. In his philosophical role as translator, Ricoeur was, I believe, unrivaled in his time. Indeed, one could say that Ricoeur's thought represented both philosophy *as* translation and a philosophy *of* translation. In what follows below I will concentrate mainly on the latter.

1. Ricoeur's Philosophy of Translation

In *On Translation*, one of Ricoeur's last works, published in French in 2004 and in English in 2006, Ricoeur treats directly of the processes and problems of translation. He outlines two paradigms. First, the *linguistic paradigm*, which refers to how words relate to meanings within language or between languages. And, second, the *ontological paradigm*, which refers to how translation occurs between one human self and another. Let me say something about each.[1]

a) *The Linguistic Paradigm.* Language is one, yet languages are many. In this very distinction lies the primordial need for translation. What all languages share in common is a capacity to mediate between a human speaker and a world of meanings (actual and possible) spoken about. But if this function constitutes the unifying property of language, the fact that there exists a plurality of languages, both living and dead, means that we are faced with a double duty of translation, internal and external. In short, one of Ricoeur's great originalities is the way in which he demonstrates how translation is both *intra*-lingual and *inter*-lingual.

Ricoeur's understanding of the historical development of the philosophy of translation helps clarify the issue. Some of the earliest reflections on the problems and enigmas of translation go back, at least in Western history, to the major encounters between cultures. In classical times, we find the translation between Greek and Latin languages to be a crucial landmark, while the famous feats of biblical translation from Hebrew and Aramaic to Greek and Latin—ranging from the Septuagint to the decisive translations of St. Jerome (author of the Vulgate), or later again, of Luther in German, or the King James authors

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction* (Paris: Bayard, 2004); translated by Eileen Brennan as *On Translation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

in English—mark yet another set of milestones in the history of inter-linguistic translation.

One of the earliest words for a translator in Greek was *hermeneus* and in Latin *interpres*. Both terms, notes Ricoeur, carry the sense of an intermediary laboring between two distinct languages or speakers. The term *translator* arises from the Latin verb, *transfero, transfere, translatum*, which evolves into the term *translatare, translater* in the Romance languages of the Middle Ages (hence the later English *translate*). In the fifteenth century, the Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni became the first modern thinker to devote an entire scientific treatise to the art of translation, entitled *De Interpretatione Recta* (1420). Here Ricoeur locates the original appearance of the term *traducere*, referring to a unitary concept of translation and giving rise in the sixteenth century to the French term *traducteur*, employed by the humanist Etienne Dolet.[2] The twentieth century saw a number of influential theorists of translation, from Croce and Rosenzweig to Benjamin (*The Task of the Translator*) and Steiner (*After Babel*). Ricoeur's own recent study on translation follows in the footsteps of these intellectual predecessors. What Ricoeur adds is a singularly hermeneutic twist, as I endeavor to show below.

As mentioned, Ricoeur underscores the way in which some of the great translations of biblical and classical texts played formative roles in the development of both national and cultural identities. He is fully conscious of the dramatic influence exerted by Luther's German translation of the Bible, or the Moravian Brethern's Czech translation, or the Genevan French translation, not to mention the crucial role played by renditions of classical texts in the birth of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or Romanticism. In all these instances of inter-linguistic translation, the transmigration of one linguistic thesaurus into another was linked with modern ideas of human emancipation and change. And the momentous encounter with the Other outside the nation, or indeed the European world generally—with the discovery of other continents and civilizations from the fifteenth century onwards—is a crucial reminder for Ricoeur of the modern necessity of translation. Thus understood,

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[2] I am indebted to Dominico Jervolino for this reference to Dolet and to several other sources on the history of translation cited below. See Jervolino's illuminating paper, "The Hermeneutics of the Self and the Paradigm of Translation," presented at the Rome International Conference on Translation (April 2004) and his Introduction to *La traduzione: Una sfida etica* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2001), 7–35. See also his pioneering essay, "Herméneutique et traduction. L'autre, l'étranger, l'hôte," *Archives de Philosophie* 63 (2000): 79–93.

translation has always been, in Antoine Berman's resonant (and virtually untranslatable!) phrase, oft cited by Ricoeur—*une épreuve de l' étranger*.[3]

b) *The Ontological Paradigm.* Translation is understood by Ricoeur in both a specific and a general sense. In the specific sense—the one in common contemporary usage, outlined above—it signals the work of translating the meanings of one particular language into another. In the more generic sense, it indicates the ontological act of speaking as a way of not only translating oneself to oneself (inner to outer, private to public, unconscious to conscious) but also, and more explicitly, of translating oneself to others. As Dominico Jervolino puts it: "To speak is already to translate (even when one is speaking one's own native language or when one is speaking to oneself); further, one has to take into account the plurality of languages, which demand a more exacting encounter with the different Other. One is tempted to say that there is a plurality of languages because we are originally plural. The encounter with the Other cannot be avoided. If one accepts the necessary nature of the encounter, linguistic pluralism appears no longer as a malediction, as the received interpretation of the myth of Babel would have it, but as a condition which requires us to surrender the all-encompassing dream of a perfect language (and of a global translation, so to speak, without residues). The partiality and the finitude of individual languages is then viewed not as an insurmountable obstacle but as the very precondition of communication among individuals."[4]

This ontological model of translation is, I believe, one of Ricoeur's most consequential insights. It demonstrates how and why translation *matters*. And it lies at the basis of his ethical and political theory, as we shall see in the next section. Ricoeur compares the work of the translator to that of a middleman between "two masters," between an author and a reader, a self and another. He underscores the word "work," stressing the importance of both (i) a *labor of memory*, and (ii) a *labor of mourning*. As such, Ricoeur borrows liberally from Freud's famous notion of 'working through' (*Durcharbeitung*).

This emphasis on the work-like character of translation refers to the common experience of tension and suffering that the translator undergoes as he/she checks the basic impulse to reduce the otherness of the other, thereby subsuming alien meaning into one's own scheme of things. The work of translation might thus be said to carry a double duty: to expropriate oneself from

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[3] Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

[4] "The Hermeneutics of the Self," 6; see also Paul Zumthor, *Babel ou l'inachèvement* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

oneself as one appropriates the other to oneself. In other words, we are called to make our language put on the stranger's clothes at the same time as we invite the stranger to step into the fabric of our own speech. The result of a good translation is when one language rediscovers itself in and as another (*soi-même come un autre*).

Ricoeur argues that good translations involve a crucial openness to the other. Indeed he recommends that we be prepared to forfeit our native language's claim to self-sufficiency—which can sometimes go to extremes of nationalism and chauvinism—in order to 'host' (qua *hospes*) the 'foreign' (*hostis*). As the linquist Emile Benveniste points out in *Le Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européenes*, the two terms *hospes* and *hostis* are etymologically akin.[5] Following Benveniste, Ricoeur writes: "Despite the conflictual character which renders the task of the translator dramatic, he or she will find satisfaction in what I would like to call *linguistic hospitality*. Its predicament is that of a correspondence without complete adhesion. This is a fragile condition, which admits of no verification other than a new translation . . . a sort of duplication of the work of the translator which is possible in virtue of a minimum of bilingualism: to translate afresh after the translator." And he adds (again in *On Translation*): "Just as in a narration it is always possible to tell the story in a different way, likewise in translation it is always possible to translate otherwise, without ever hoping to bridge the gap between equivalence and perfect adhesion. Linguistic hospitality, therefore, is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling."[6]

Linguistic hospitality calls us to forgo the lure of omnipotence: the illusion of a total translation that would provide a perfect replica of the original. Instead it asks us to respect the fact that the semantic and syntactic fields of two languages are not the same, nor exactly reducible the one to the other. Connotations, contexts, and cultural characteristics will always exceed any slide rule of neat equation between tongues. Short of some kind of abstract symbolic logic—or fantasy Esperanto logos—there is no single unitary language. Translation, as George Steiner has powerfully reminded us, is always *after babel*.[7] It is forever compelled to acknowledge the finite limits of speech,

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5) Emile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris: Minuit, 1969).

6) *Sur la traduction*, 19–20.

7) George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). For an excellent analysis of the ontological aspects of translation see John Sallis, *On Translation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

the multiplicity of different tongues. To function authentically, therefore, the translator must renounce the dream of a return to some adamantine logos of pure correspondences. The attempt to retrieve a pre-lapsarian paradise of timeless signs is futile. And sometimes dangerous. Even the Enlightenment ideal of a perfect universal language was obliged to recognize the genuine resistances of cultural differences predicated upon linguistic diversities. Indeed, most attempts to instantiate an absolute universal language proved, in point of fact, to be thinly disguised imperial ploys to impose one particular language (e.g., French, English, Spanish) over other politically subordinate ones. Here Ricoeur's deep ethical commitment to social justice and equity come to the fore, a point to which we shall return in the next section.

As soon as there is language there is interpretation, that is, translation. *In principio fuit interpres*. Words exist in time and space, and thus have a history of meanings that alter and evolve. All translation involves some aspect of dialogue between self and stranger. Dialogue means just that, *dia-legein*, welcoming the difference. It is for this reason that in his essay "The Paradigm of Translation," Ricoeur proposes translation as a model of hermeneutics. Both in its normal role as a transfer of meaning from one language to another and in its more specific role as a transfer of understanding between different members of the same linguistic community, translation entails an exposure to strangeness. We are dealing with both an alterity residing *outside* the home language and an alterity residing *within* it. "The gap between a hypothetical perfect language and the concreteness of a living language is felt again and again in the linguistic exchange: it is always possible to say the same thing in a different way. Now, to say something in a different way, to say it in other terms, is exactly what a translator does from one language to the other. The inputs at the two ends, the two halves of the problem, so to speak, clarify each other and present again the enigma and the richness of the relationship with the Other."[8]

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It might be noted that Ricoeur's theory of translation here follows a similar emphasis to his theory of the *text* as model of interpretation in the seventies and eighties. In both cases, Ricoeur underscores the 'distancing' of sense. In

[8] "The Hermeneutics of Self," 8; see also Jervolino, "Translation as Paradigm for Hermeneutics and Its Implications for an Ethics of Hospitality," in *Ars Interpretandi*, vol. 5 (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2000), 57–69.

the case of the written text, this refers to how meaning gains autonomy from 1) the intention of the original *author* (e.g., Homer); 2) the original *world* of circumstances in which the author wrote or which she/he wrote about (Homeric Greece); and 3) the original *readers* of the text when it was first produced (the Greek community who read Homer's *Odyssey*).

A similar aspect of 'distantiation' occurs in translation where the estrangement of meaning precedes and even provokes the subsequent act of reading as a renewed reappropriation of the original meaning. Or as Ricoeur liked to put it, the best path to selfhood is through otherness. Thus while Schleiermacher and the romantic hermeneuts tended to favor a somewhat Platonic model of dialogue as a return (*anamnesis/aneignung*) to original meanings, Ricoeur might be said to favor a more Aristotelian model that stresses a) a plurality of meanings and b) a methodical appreciation of the complex 'poetics' and 'rhetorics' involved in the interpretation of linguistic meaning. (Hence, as already noted, the importance of Ricoeur's call, *pace* Gadamer and Heidegger, for a rigorous critical relationship with the human sciences—including linguistics—and a surpassing of the old dichotomy between 'understanding' and 'explanation'. Though it has to be said that the gap between Ricoeur and Gadamer became quite narrow in the end.)

For Ricoeur the matter is clear: there is no self-understanding possible without the labor of mediation through signs, symbols, narratives, and texts. The idealist romantic subject, sovereign master of itself and all it surveys, is replaced by an engaged self that only finds itself after it has traversed the field of foreignness and returned to itself again, altered and enlarged, or as James Joyce would say, 'othered'. The *moi* gives way to the *soi*, or more precisely to *soi-même comme un autre*. The arc of translation epitomizes this journey from self through the other, reminding us of the irreducible finitude and contingency of all language. And here, of course, we find echoes of Ricoeur's early writings on finitude and fallibility from *Freedom and Nature* to *Fallible Man*.

For Ricoeur, the task of *outer* translation finds correspondences in the work of *inner* translation. Indeed the very problem of human identity, as he shows in *Oneself as Another*, involves a discovery of an other within the very depths of the self. This 'other within' is itself plural, signifying by turns the unconscious, the body, the call of conscience, the traces of our relations with other human beings, or the sign of transcendence inscribed in the deepest interiority of the human heart. This means that the question of human identity or, more exactly, the answer to the question "*who* are you?" always entails a translation between the self and others both within the self and outside the self. Every subject, as Ricoeur puts it, is a tapestry of stories heard and told. This makes

of each one of us a narrative identity, operating as both authors and readers of our own lives. Which is another way of saying, *translators* of our own lives.

Life stories and life histories are always parts of larger stories and histories in which we find ourselves entwined (*empêtré*). This is where the paradigm of translation as transference to and fro, forward and back, reveals its everyday power. "To think, to speak is always to translate, even when one speaks to oneself, when one discovers the traces of the Other in oneself. After all, language, understood as a peculiarly human attribute, is always coupled to a specific and particular language and to the variety and plurality of languages."[9] Indeed, Ricoeur goes so far as to suggest that the future ethos of European politics, and eventually of world politics, should be one based upon an exchange of memories and narratives between different nations, for it is only when we translate our own wounds into the language of strangers and retranslate the wounds of strangers into our own language that healing and reconciliation can take place.[10]

2. The Ethics of Translation: Applied Hermeneutics

This brings us to Ricoeur's ultimate claim that an ethics of translation involves a process of inter-linguistic hospitality. The world is made up of a plurality of human beings, cultures, tongues. Humanity exists in the plural mode. Which means that any legitimate form of universality must always—if the hermeneutic model of translation is observed—find its equivalent plurality. The creative tension between the universal and the plural ensures that the task of translation is an endless one, a work of tireless memory and mourning, of appropriation and disappropriation, of taking up and letting go, of expressing oneself and welcoming others. The final word of Ricoeur's last major published book, *Memory, History and Forgetting* (2000, in French; 2005, in English), is 'incompletion' (*inachèvement*).[11] And this is telling. For it acknowledges that translation, understood as an endlessly unfinished business, is a signal not of failure but of hope. 'Fallible Man' finds a new vocation as 'Capable Man'.

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9) "The Hermeneutics of Self," 9; and "La question de l'unité de l'oeuvre de Ricoeur: La paradigme de la traduction," *Archives de Philosophie* 4 (2004): 659–68.

10) Ricoeur, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Sage, 1996), especially the section entitled "The Model of Translation," pp. 4–5.

11) Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 657; translated by David Pellauer as *Memory, History and Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Let me conclude, then, with some remarks on Ricoeur's appreciation of the *ethical* implications of translation as a hermeneutic model of existence. In an important essay entitled "Reflections on a new Ethos for Europe" (1992, in French; 1996, in English), Ricoeur outlines five ethical functions of translation.[12]

(a) A hermeneutics of translation provides, first, a basis for an *ethic of hospitality*. This, says Ricoeur, involves "taking responsibility in imagination and in sympathy for the story of the other, through the life narratives which concern the other."[13] In the cross-over of testimonies and memories between people of different cultural traditions we may witness a salutary transference permitting us to welcome the story of the other, the stranger, the victim, the forgotten one.

(b) Second, a hermeneutic of translation solicits an *ethic of narrative flexibility*. Cultures constantly face the challenge of resisting the reification of a founding historical or mythical event into a fixed dogma; they can do this by showing how each event may be told in different ways by different generations and by different narrators. Not that everything thereby becomes relative and arbitrary. On the contrary, acts of foundational suffering or struggle, for example, call out for compassion and justice; and the best way of achieving this is often to invite empathy with strangers and adversaries by allowing for a plurality of narrative perspectives. The resulting overlap may thus lead to what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' where diverse horizons of consciousness and conscience may at last find common ground.[14] A reciprocal transfer between opposite minds. "The identity of a group, culture, people or nation, is not that of an immutable substance," writes Ricoeur, "nor that of a fixed structure, but that, rather, of a recounted story." A hermeneutic exchange of stories effectively resists arrogant conceptions of cultural identity that prevent us from perceiving the radical implications of the principle of narrative translatability—namely, "the possibilities of revising every story which has been handed down and of carving out a place for several stories directed towards the same past."[15] This mode of attentiveness to stories other than our own—fostered by intercultural translatability—might be said to consort well with

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12) "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," 5–14.

13) Ibid., 7. Another plea for a certain kind of understanding, wisdom, and phronetic 'reason' as alternatives to panic and fear before terror is offered by Corey Robin, "Reason to Panic," in "Fear Itself," special issue, *The Hedgehog Review* 5, no. 3 (Fall, 2003): 62–80.

14) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 273f.

15) "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," 7.

the virtue of detachment vis-à-vis one's own obsessive attachment to what is 'mine' and 'ours'.

(c) This leads us to a third ethical principle of translation—that of *narrative plurality*. Pluralism here does not mean lack of respect for the singularity and uniqueness of a particular event (historical, cultural, religious). It might even be said to increase our sense of awareness of such singularity, especially if it is foreign to us in time, space, or cultural provenance. "*Recounting differently* is not inimical to a certain historical reverence to the extent that the inexhaustible richness of the event is honored by the diversity of stories which are made of it, and by the competition to which that diversity gives rise."[16] Multiple perspectives need not betray the concrete specificity of an historical event. On the contrary, they may eloquently testify to its inexhaustible richness and suggestiveness. And this faithful testimony may in fact be deepened as we extend the circle of reference to include further or alternative perspectives. Ricoeur adds this critical point: "The ability to recount the founding events of our history in different ways is reinforced by the exchange of cultural memories. This ability to exchange has as a touchstone the will to share symbolically and respectfully in the commemoration of the founding events of other cultures, as well as those of their ethnic minorities and their minority religious denominations."[17] This point applies as much to events of pain and trauma as to events of pride and celebration.

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16) Ibid., 8. This principle of radical hermeneutic plurality calls for an equally radical pluralist politics. I would suggest a political theorist like Chantale Mouffe offers some interesting possibilities here when she talks about moving beyond an 'antagonistic' politics of us-versus-them to a more democratic 'agonistic' politics that fosters a robust and creative conflict of interpretations. She argues that when the political channels are not available through which conflicts can take an 'agonistic' form, they degenerate into the 'antagonistic' model of absolutist polarization between good and evil, the opponent being perceived as an 'enemy' or 'demon' to be destroyed. The mistakenness of apocalyptic politics is evident here. But there is a more subtle error committed by certain strands of liberal rationalism and individualism when they ignore the crucial motivational role played by communal affects, passions, and identifications in our contemporary world. Mouffe concludes that the goal of genuine democracy is not to move from a bipolar to a unipolar system of politics but to foster the emergence of a multipolar world with a balance among several regional poles allowing for a plurality of powers. By converting *antagonism* into *agonism*, we are allowing dissent to express itself within a common symbolic space, rather than resorting to violence. Adversaries thus become legitimate opponents, rather than illegitimate enemies. This, she suggests, is the only way to avoid the hegemony of one single hyperpower or the collapse into violent chaos. See her book, *On the Political*, (London: Routledge, 2005).

17) "Reflections on a New Ethos," 9.

(d) A fourth ethical function of translation is the *transfiguring of the past*. This involves a creative retrieval of the betrayed promises of history. It permits us, for example, to respond to our 'debt to the dead' and endeavor to give them a voice. The goal of tolerant testimonies is, therefore, to try to give a future to the past by remembering it in a more attentive way, both ethically and poetically. A crucial aspect of reinterpreting traditions is the task of discerning past promises that have *not yet* been honored. For "the past is not only what is bygone—that which has taken place and can no longer be changed—it also lives in the memory thanks to arrows of futurity which have not been fired or whose trajectory has been interrupted."[18] In other words, translations from the past can actually give an unfulfilled future to the past. For, as Ricoeur reminds us, the emancipation of the "unfulfilled future of the past is the major benefit that we can expect from the crossing of memories and the exchange of narratives."[19] It is especially the founding events of a particular, national, political, or religious community—traumatic or emancipatory—that require being reread in this critical manner. For, in so doing, we may unlock the potencies and expectancies that the subsequent unfolding of history has forgotten or betrayed. Fundamentalism, of whatever ideology, is another term for such betrayal. This is why hermeneutic tolerance involves a special acoustic, a particular practice of auditory imagination attuned to seminal moments of suffering or hope—as well as to the various complex testimonial and textual responses to those events—that are often occluded by Official History. "The past is a cemetery of promises that have not been kept," notes Ricoeur. And attentive modes of remembrance may provide ways of "bringing them back to life like the dry bones in the valley described in the prophecy of Ezekiel."[20]

(e) A fifth and final moment in the hermeneutics of translation is *pardon*. If empathy and hospitality towards others are crucial steps in an ethic of nonviolence, there is something *more*—something that entails moving beyond narrative imagination to forgiveness. In short, the mutual translation of memories of suffering demands more than sympathy and duty (though these are

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18) Ibid., 8. See also Ricoeur "Memory and Forgetting" and "Imagination, Testimony and Trust," in *Questioning Ethics*, ed. Mark Dooley and Richard Kearney (London: Routledge, 2004), 5–11 and 12–17. See also on this subject of critical and empathic remembrance, R. Kearney, "Narrative and the Ethics of Remembrance," in *Questioning Ethics*, 18–30.

19) "Reflections on a New Ethos," 8. See also Francis Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 26–27; *Buddhists Talk about Jesus, Christians Talk about the Buddha*, ed. Rita Gross and Terry Muck (New York: Continuum, 2002); Swami Tyagananda, "Harmony of Religions," (lecture, Harvard University, April 8, 2000) (www.vedanta.org).

20) "Reflections on a New Ethos," 9.

essential for any kind of justice). And this something 'extra' involves pardon insofar as pardon means 'shattering the debt'. Here the order of justice and reciprocity can be supplemented, but not replaced, by that of the order of 'charity and gift'. Such forgiveness demands huge patience, an enduring practice of 'working-through', mourning and letting go. But it is not a forgetful forgiveness. Amnesty can never be based on amnesia. It remembers our debt to the dead while at the same time introducing something other, something difficult almost to the point of impossibility, but something all the more important for that. One thinks of Brandt kneeling at Warsaw, Havel's apology to the Sudeten Germans, Hume's dialogue with Gerry Adams and the IRA, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, Hillesum's refusal to hate her hateful persecutioners. Or of certain survivors of 9/11 who, having witnessed what the terrorists did, or lost loved ones, still refused to cry vengeance.

Such exceptional moments signal a point in the hermeneutics of translation where an *ethics of justice* is touched by a *poetics of pardon*. The one does not and cannot replace the other. Justice *and* pardon are crucially important in our response to suffering. They are both called for. For, as Ricoeur reminds us, if at moments, charity does indeed exceed justice, "we must guard against substituting it for justice." Charity remains a surplus; and it is this very "surplus of compassion and tenderness [that] is capable of giving the exchange of memories its profound motivation, its daring and its momentum."[21] The surplus, evidenced in pardon, is endless in its demands for translation and inexhaustible in its resources. It is what makes the impossibility of forgiving possible.

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21) Ibid., 11. For a more elaborate analysis of this point see Ricoeur, "Love and Justice," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, 23–40. See also here Ricoeur's concluding section on "Difficult Pardon" in *Memory, History and Forgetting* and Derrida's more deconstructive notion of 'impossible pardon' in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001). Notions of unconditional love, pardon, and compassion are by no means the exclusive preserve of the great monotheistic or religious Wisdom traditions. They are also centrally present in the philosophical tradition of ancient Greece, as we have noted elsewhere: see the conclusion to "On Terror" in my *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* (London: Routledge, 2003), 137: "Theseus sets out to slay the Minotaur. But Socrates declines that option. He argues instead that the Monster is best resisted by the guiding principle: 'do not harm, no matter what the circumstances'. Socrates prefers to stay on in the city than to become a murderer of its laws by escaping. Resolving to address the hidden cause of the Monstrous, rather than simply slay the beast, Socrates confirms his basic philosophy that it is better to suffer than to do wrong. He says no to the lure of sacrificial vengeance. He refuses to scapegoat." On the challenge of responding creatively, spiritually and therapeutically to our hidden monsters of fear, terror, and darkness, see Thomas Moore, *Dark Nights of the Soul*, (New York: Gotham Books, 2004).

Though no less difficult for that. That is why, as Julia Kristeva observes, "to forgive is as infinite as it is repetitive."[22]

In the difficult act of pardon, the empathy of translation between self and other must always remain attentive to the demands of justice. Pardon cannot forget protest any more than love can forget action.

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[22] Julia Kristeva, "Forgiveness," *PMLA* 117, no. 2 (March 2002): 282, cited by Kelly Oliver in "Forgiveness and Subjectivity," *Philosophy Today* 47, no. 3 (2003): 280. Oliver offers a very useful critical overview of some of the most significant discussions of forgiveness in contemporary psychoanalysis and deconstruction, with particularly instructive attention to the work of Derrida, Arendt, and Kristeva. She concludes her analysis with a plea for an ethics of the unconscious, capable of combining responsibility with forgiveness: "Subjectivity requires revolt and transgression in order to individuate but it also presupposes forgiveness in order to belong to the community.… the revolt of those excluded from the dominant order… is seen as uppitiness, perversion or terrorism. Their revolt is not forgiven.… This withholding or foreclosure is an essential part of domination and oppression, which operate through the colonization of psychic space precisely by denying the possibility of sublimation, revolt and forgiveness." She proposes this response: "The notion of the unconscious gives us an ethics of responsibility without sovereignty. We are responsible for what we cannot and do not control, our unconscious fears and desires and their affective representations. In addition, we are responsible for the effects of those fears, desires and affects on others. This impossible responsibility entails the imperative to question ourselves and constantly engage in self-critical hermeneutics, which also gives meaning to our lives. Responsible ethics and politics requires that we account for the unconscious. Without doing so we risk self-righteously adhering to deadly principles in the name of freedom and justice." (289).

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Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur

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Abstract
Truth is attributed by hermeneutical phenomenology not only to science but also to art and literature. According to Ricoeur, its veritable bearer is the expression of experience that can take artistic and literary forms as well as scientific ones. However, truth in this sense cannot be defined as a correspondence with a ready-made reality, nor can it be reduced to any internal coherence in our knowledge of the world. What is, then, its precise meaning in this context? The two terms mentioned in the title—'redescription' and 'refiguration' of reality—indicate the two answers Ricoeur gives to this question. The similarities and the differences between these two answers are submitted to an inquiry in the following paper, which, relying upon Ricoeur, adumbrates the outlines of a phenomenological and hermeneutical approach to truth.

Keywords
phenomenology, hermeneutics, theory of truth, metaphor, narrative

Ἔστιν … τῆς … πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις.[1] (The plot [of a tale or a fable] is the imitation of action.) Ricoeur devotes lengthy meditations to this sentence from Aristotle's *Poetics*. It is not difficult to see what is at stake: Ricoeur takes inspiration from Aristotle's approach to Greek tragedy in order to elaborate a hermeneutical concept of *truth* that applies to literature and art. He draws on the notion of 'imitation' (μίμησις), but it is not a copy or picture of reality that he means by this term. That is why he relies more upon Aristotle than upon Plato. The plot or intrigue (μῦθος) of tragedy treated at length in the *Poetics* is not a depiction of action but a creatively produced configuration that distinctively characterizes a tale, a fable, or a narrative in general. The question of truth Ricoeur is concerned with is related to fiction, which, as such, does not even claim to *imitate* or *represent* reality. If a literary or artistic work may be

[1] Aristotle, *Poetica*, ed. A. Gudeman (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1934), 1450a3.

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considered as a bearer of truth at all, then certainly not in the sense of any correspondence with a ready-made reality. Then how should the concept of truth be understood in this context?

Within a decade, Ricoeur gives two answers to this question, which are slightly different from each other, even if they point in the same direction. The first answer is formulated in *The Rule of Metaphor* (published in 1975); the key term of this work is 'redescription of reality'. The second answer is elaborated in *Time and Narrative* (published in three volumes from 1983 to 1985); here the term 'refiguration' is preferred to 'redescription'. It is instructive to inquire into the reasons for this substitution, since they may indeed shed some light on the meaning of truth in Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology. This meaning is not adequately characterized by any assumption of a self-manifestation of reality, or even of an unconcealment of Being. For, in Ricoeur's opinion, truth is inseparable from what may be described as the *expression of lively experience*. This reference to a lively experience may be seen as a genuinely phenomenological feature in Ricoeur's hermeneutical concept of truth.

The following considerations set themselves the task of elucidating the relationship between 'redescription' and 'refiguration' of reality in Ricoeur's thought. Their further aim is to reconstruct the conception of truth that finds its expression, even if not in the same way, in both of these notions.

1. Redescription of Reality as an Expression of Actuality

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur is concerned with what he designates in the French original as *métaphore vive*. The expression 'living metaphor' has two meanings in the text.

First, it is opposed to 'dead' metaphor. The latter term refers to an already sedimented figurative sense that is hardly distinguishable any longer from the literal meaning of an expression. Dead metaphors are included in dictionaries. The 'leg of a table', the 'foot of a mountain', or the 'core of a theory' are cases in point. Ricoeur tries to determine what is peculiar to a living metaphor by entering into a debate with the tradition of European rhetorics. He attacks the basic assumptions of this tradition, rejecting above all the idea that the passage from a literal to a figurative meaning characteristic of metaphorical expression affects a single word. He maintains, on the contrary, that the inquiry into metaphorical meaning must be transposed on the level of sentences. Another inveterated conception he tries to overcome is the so-called 'substitution theory' of metaphor. According to this theory, the function of metaphor is

restricted to replacing the literal meaning of a lacking, or at least actually absent, expression. If this theory holds good, metaphor cannot be regarded as indispensable, even if it finds a use by filling an actual gap in language or just by decorating speech. Ricoeur fights against this conception, because in a living metaphor he discovers a creation of new meaning or, as he puts it, a 'semantic innovation'. He sees in it, in Kantian terms, the work of 'creative imagination'.[2] That is why he opposes his 'tension theory' of metaphor to the traditional view, holding that metaphor is an impertinent, but inventive and illuminating, predication.

The expression 'living metaphor' has, however, also a further meaning. This second meaning of the term is related to Ricoeur's attempt to apply the distinction between sense and reference to metaphor. Just as sense is connected with reference, 'semantic innovation' is connected with a 'heuristic function'. What this function is aimed at is indicated at the end of the first chapter (called "Study") of *The Rule of Metaphor* as follows: "*Lively* expression is that which expresses existence as *alive*."[3] At the end of the last study this proposition is repeated in a slightly different form (at least in the French original): "*Lively* expression is that which expresses experience as *alive*."[4] These allusions to 'lively existence' and 'lively experience' prepare the way to assign to metaphor a reference to reality and a particular kind of truth.

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, truth proves to be inseparable from what may be designated as the *expression of lively experience in language*. Ricoeur tries to make clear what he has in mind by drawing upon three thinkers: *Kant, Heidegger*, and *Aristotle*.

Renewing Kant's notion of an aesthetic idea, he asserts that metaphor *gives to think*:[5] it can be characterized as living "not only to the extent that it vivifies

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2) On this notion see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Philosophical Antecedents to Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*," in *On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. D. Wood (London: Routledge, 1991), 34–54.

3) P. Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive*, (Paris: Seuill, 1975), 61: "L'expression *vive* est ce qui dit l'existence *vive*"; translated by R. Czerny with K. McLaughlin and J. Costello as *The Rule of Metaphor* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 43. Hereafter pages cite first the French, then the English texts.

4) *La métaphore vive*, 391: "L'expression *vive* est ce qui dit l'expérience *vive*"; in English: p. 308. Here the English translation repeats the formula used at the end of the first study. Therefore, it replaces the word 'experience' with the word 'existence'.

5) Ibid., 384/303.

a constituted language," but also by virtue of the fact that it "introduces the spark of imagination into a 'thinking more' at the conceptual level."[6]

Ricoeur attempts to determine the nature of this vivifying power of metaphor by relying upon Heidegger. He refers to the Hölderlinian and Heideggerian formula of "words as flowers" (*Worte, wie Blumen*) in order to illustrate his main contention, according to which metaphor has the ability to "*signify the blossoming of appearing*."[7]

Finally, Ricoeur draws upon Aristotle's *Poetics* in order to indicate that metaphor can be compared with the plot of a tale or fable (μῦθος) interpreted as the imitation (μίμησις) of action in a sense that has to be distinguished from a simple copy or picture of reality. He shares the opinion of Roman Jakobson and others, according to which language in its poetic function differs from ordinary speech precisely by ceasing to refer to reality. The reference of the words inserted into a poem or another work of fiction may be said to be *suspended*. However, Ricoeur joins Jakobson in attributing to metaphor a 'split reference', meaning by this expression that a reference of an entirely new kind, a second-level reference or, as it is called in *The Rule of Metaphor*, a *displayed* reference, is built up in poetic language on the very ruins of the first-level reference of the words used in a metaphorical way.

It is precisely this displayed reference that enables metaphor to 'signify the blossoming of appearing'. In Ricoeur's view, it is the suspension of ordinary reference, comparable to a Husserlian *epoché*, that opens the way to a *redescription of reality*. Metaphor manifests things, as Aristotle puts it in his *Rhetorics*, "as in a state of activity [ἐνεργοῦντα σημαίνει]."[8] To express this idea in other terms, Ricoeur uses the concise formula according to which metaphor reveals "the Real as Act."[9] It is this formula that defines the sense of what Ricoeur designates as "metaphorical truth."[10]

It is, however, not easy to say precisely how the idea of a 'revelation of the Real as Act' is to be understood. Let me, therefore, give an interpretation of this idea that goes beyond the letter of Ricoeur's text but grasps, as I hope, its spirit.

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6) Ibid. Cf. I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Akademie Ausgabe, vol. 5 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1913), § 49, p. 314 f.

7) *La métaphore vive*, 392/309.

8) Aristoteles, *Ars rhetorica*, ed. R. Kassel (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1976), 3.11.1411b24–25.

9) *La métaphore vive*, 61/43.

10) Ibid., 311/247.

The starting-point of my interpretation is the Ricoeurian idea that *art and literature transmit to us genuine experiences of the world*. Experiences lay a claim to *truth*. That is why one cannot be satisfied with an aesthetics based solely and exclusively upon the notion of beauty. A hermeneutic phenomenology necessarily vindicates *truth* for poetic language and art. However, whereas truth is *learned* from scholarly books, it is *experienced* in art and literature, just as in life. Truth in experience seems to be different from the truth of a statement or proposition; 'metaphorical truth', in Ricoeur's sense, must therefore be distinguished from what could be designated as 'factual truth'.

As Gadamer rightly remarks, an experience that deserves its name necessarily "baffles some expectation."[11] It gives rise to a new sense that emerges all of a sudden. Experience is characterized by an effect of surprise, since it manifests itself by unsettling inveterated opinions, upsetting previous calculations, and countering the designs built upon them. However, what we are surprised to learn from experience is not always a new element of articulated knowledge. A new experience does not necessarily convey to us a new piece of information about the world. Sometimes, we have an experience *in concreto* of what we have already known *in abstracto*. What we learn from such an experiece is not a ready-made fact. We learn, for instance, from experience what it is *like* to *be* a professor, a husband, or a father, even if we do not learn any new fact about academic life, marriage, or fatherhood.

Obviously, such an experience is characterized by quite a peculiar claim to truth. One could try to grasp the peculiarity of this claim by defining truth in experience, following in the footsteps of Heidegger, as the self-manifestation of reality or the unconcealment of Being. This conception of truth, a genuinely hermeneutic one, is based on certain convictions that are indeed shared by Ricoeur, too. Three convictions of this sort can be enumerated:

(i) First, it may be maintained that the notion of truth in experience cannot be based on a static relationship between a statement or proposition and a corresponding fact; it is, in reality, inseparable from the *dynamic event*, in which something *turns out to be the truth* (instead of something previously expected).

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[11] H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1975), 330.

(ii) Second, a further look at this event shows that it is *by itself* that truth manifests itself in experience. Truth in experience remains indomitable, unmasterable; although it certainly can roughly be anticipated, it is never entirely foreseeable or predictable, because it always has some surprise in store.

(iii) Third, it may even be added that truth could not be disclosed in experience, if *it had not always already revealed itself*. What is described by Heidegger as the unconcealment of Being seems to be at least a necessary condition of truth in experience.

Up to a certain point, Ricoeur follows the guidelines of this conception of truth. However, he takes ultimately a different course by emphasizing that the 'revelation of the Real as Act' is the achievement of a lively expression of experience in language. According to Ricoeur, it is not experience as *part and parcel of actual life*, but solely a lively *expression* of experience that may lay a claim to what is called 'metaphorical truth'. As it has already been quoted, lively expression is that which expresses 'lively existence' or 'existence as alive'. Ricoeur draws here upon the Aristotelian idea of ἐνέργεια, a notion, which is rendered in *The Rule of Metaphor* by the periphrastic term *lively existence*, but which may be translated into English as *actuality* as well. In Ricoeur's view, lively existence or actuality is nothing else but reality, as it manifests itself in lively experience. In other words, actuality is reality, insofar as it is encountered in actual life, not insofar as it is objectified in scientific knowledge. This distinction provides the particle 'as' in the expression 'the Real *as* Act' with a precise meaning. Metaphor, and language in its poetical use in general, describes reality, as it manifests itself in lively experience. That is why we may hold that truth in experience is nothing else but the *expression of reality as actuality*. Actuality is reality, insofar as it is *inhabited* by us.

Truth in this sense cannot be defined as a correspondence with a ready-made reality, nor can it be equated with any internal coherence in our knowledge of the world. It may rather be described as an *expression of actuality*. Here the idea of expressing an internal state of mind has to be entirely discarded. This idea is just as much rejected by Ricoeur as by Heidegger or Gadamer. Expression is to be understood as the expression of *experience*. Experience, however, is not a mental act or state, but an event that often emerges, as Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "behind the back of consciousness."[12]

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[12] Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, hrsg. E. Moldenhauer and K.-M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 80.

Actuality is not just the self-manifestation of reality, but its self-manifestation in a lively experience; and truth is not just this self-manifestation, but a lively expression of it. It is important to see that there are always *several* possible expressions of reality as actuality. Consequently, truth in experience is not exclusive. Nor is it truth in art and literature. Truth is the *truth of an expression*, and there are always *different* possible expressions that lay a claim to truth. In experience, just as well as in art and literature, it is possible to enter truth, as it were, through *different gates*.

Nothing would be more natural than to hold that an expression of reality as actuality necessarily manifests things as they are encountered in the course of *somebody's personal history*. This view is indeed pertinent, but not far-reaching enough. William James is certainly right in saying that, for instance, the experience of a room enters not only "the history of the house of which the room is part" but also the "personal biography" of the one who has this experience.[13] Experience can indeed in each case be just as well inserted into the subject's life-history as into an objective order. In empirical sciences, experiences are ordered according to different regions of objects. But they can simultaneously be ordered according to different relations between subjective acts as well. It is precisely this possibility that Husserlian phenomenology makes use of. However, experience is not entirely exhausted by these two possibilities. Indeed, experience may also be grasped as an *event* that *precedes the very distinction between an objective and a subjective order*. Not only William James tries to show this in his *Essays in Radical Empiricism* but also Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and some later phenomenologists adopt this view. Ricoeur himself draws upon Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek term φύσις as *Aufgehen*—in the double sense of spontaneous generation or growth and of self-manifestation or appearance—in order to claim that language in its poetical use manifests things, as they may be experienced, as it were, in their *nascent state*, or, to employ once again this metaphor, in their *blossoming forth*.[14] It is in this sense that Ricoeur claims: "Poetic discourse brings to language a pre-objective world, in which we find ourselves already rooted, but in which we also project our innermost possibilities"; in other words, it brings to language "our primordial belonging to a world which we inhabit."[15]

Yet, truth in experience presupposes not only belonging to such a world but also a certain *distanciation* from it. That is why Ricoeur lays stress upon the expression of experience, rather than upon experience as part and parcel of

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13) W. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 7.

14) *La métaphore vive*, 392/308.

15) Ibid., 387/306.

actual life. However, distanciation does not mean any objectifying attitude here. The attempt to show that truth in experience is to be taken in the sense of an expression of reality *as* actuality is to be complemented by the observation that the *as-structure* contained in this formula excludes every idea of a subjective copy or picture of a pre-given objectivity. This as-structure conveys to us, rather, the idea of an alteration or transmutation, a difference in identity. The 'revelation of the Real *as* Act' implies, so to speak, a Utopian dimension of metaphorical truth. Ricoeur indeed asks: "Is it not the function of poetry to establish another world—another world that corresponds to other possibilities of existence, to possibilities that would be most our own?"[16] This Utopian dimension of poetic discourse introduces a particular tension into the notion of truth in Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology. It is this tension that requires a distanciation from all ready-made reality.

However, if this interpretation of truth in *The Rule of Metaphor* is correct, the question arises as to whether or not the 'revelation of the Real as Act' can meaningfully be designated as a 'redescription of reality'. This term seems to be all the more questionable, since it has been borrowed from the philosophy of science. Prepared by Max Black's *Models and Metaphors*,[17] it was coined by Mary B. Hesse in her *Models and Analogies in Science*.[18] The difficulty with this borrowing arises from the fact that Ricoeur's conception of 'metaphorical truth' presupposes not only a difference between scientific and poetic discourse but also a contrast with 'factual truth'. If one takes factual truth to be nothing else but a faithful description of reality, one may doubt if the idea of a 'redescription of reality' sufficiently marks the distance of metaphorical from factual truth. Does indeed the prefix "re-" in 'redescription' adequately express the difference of the revelation of reality as actuality from a faithful description of reality?

Ricoeur, however, sees no real difficulty in these objections. Even if metaphorical truth does not belong to scientific discourse, it "forces conceptual thought to *think more*."[19] In other words, it inspires philosophical thinking. By revealing reality as actuality, it leads up to a specific ontology. It is this ontology of lively existence that is considered by Ricoeur as a 'redescription of reality' in *The Rule of Metaphor*.

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16) Ibid., 288/229.

17) M. Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

18) M. B. Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).

19) *La métaphore vive*, 384/303.

Nevertheless, the relationship between factual and metaphorical truth becomes not entirely clear in this work. That is why it is important to see how a new conception of a 'refiguration of reality' is elaborated in *Time and Narrative*.

2. Refiguration of Reality as a Reorganization of Temporality

Ricoeur justifies the introduction of the new notion by considerations dedicated to the difference between metaphor and narrative. To be sure, narrative may be conceived of as some kind of an extended metaphor. However, whereas metaphor belongs to the rhetorical theory of the figures of speech, narrative is a topic treated in the theory of literary genres. Even if one discovers in metaphor, with Monroe Beardsley, a 'poem in miniature',[20] narrative remains to be distinguished from it, just as the pathetic of existence is to be distinguished from the dramatic of actions. However, it is easy to see that here 'distinction' does not mean 'separation'. Acting and suffering cannot be dissevered from each other; that is why lyric poetry necessarily accompanies dramatic poetry. Consequently, metaphorical redescription and narrative refiguration are intertwined with each other.[21] Ricoeur goes as far as to hold that the two terms can be used interchangeably. This statement may be underpinned by the observation that not only metaphor but also narrative testifies to a semantic innovation in language. Just as in metaphor an impertinent, but inventive and illuminating, predication connects diverse elements with each other, the plot of a narrative is also the work of a synthesis of the heterogeneous: it unites different aims, causes, circumstances and incidents in the temporal whole of a single action. If reality is redescribed by metaphor, it is reorganized by narrative. Ricoeur even thinks that redescription and refiguration of reality mutually imply each other.

Yet, the use of a new term rarely remains without consequences. The notion of refiguration is itself the result of a semantic innovation, which opens up some new paths of thought. In *Time and Narrative*, the conceptual triad 'prefiguration', 'configuration', and 'refiguration' determines the triple structure of narrative *mimesis*. This triple structure is conceived of as forming a hermeneutical circle, which, according to Ricoeur as well as Heidegger and

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20) M. C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1958), 134.

21) P. Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, 3 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1983–85), 1:13.

Gadamer, is an inevitable characteristic of our relationship to reality. It is not only misleading but entirely incorrect to interpret *mimesis* in *Time and Narrative* as the imitation of a ready-made reality; Ricoeur, on the contrary, holds that reality is *reshaped* or even *reworked* by story-telling. It is first and foremost the temporal structure of reality that gets involved by narrative refiguration. A story does not alter things, actions, and events; it simply provides them with a particular expression. However, by inserting them into the context of a narrative history, it reorganizes their temporal structure. It may be maintained that *narrative reveals the Real*, not merely as *Act*, but, more particularly, *as History*. According to Ricoeur, this revelation may still be regarded as a certain kind of *mimesis*, because historicity is an inherent and all-encompassing feature of reality.

This idea of a revelation of reality as history requires however some clarification. Let me begin with some general remarks.

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur aims at a great synthesis of the epistemology of historiography, the theory of literary narrative and the phenomenology of temporal experience. The leading idea of this enterprise may be elucidated by a reflection on the aporetical character of time, which, in European philosophy, was repeatedly accentuated from Aristotle and Augustine to Husserl and Heidegger. Here I do not want to delve into the single aporias treated by Ricoeur in the third volume of *Time and Narrative*. I will content myself with some observations on the paradoxical nature of temporal change.

As it is underscored by Levinas, time *modifies* without *altering*. It is in this sense that Ricoeur's famous thesis, according to which, in temporality, *modification precedes difference*,[22] is to be understood. Indeed, time does not change anything: all episodes of life remain the same as they were, even if they cease to belong to actuality. Yet, time changes everything, since it deprives all episodes of life of their very actuality. Temporal modification does not engender any real difference. But it still *makes*—in an almost literal sense of 'make'—all the difference, since it abolishes nothing less than actual existence itself. That is why time is to be considered, in Ricoeur's terms, as "a challenge lanced to the logic of the Same and the Other."[23]

However, it is one of the most fundamental tenets formulated in *Time and Narrative* that this challenge is met by stories. Assuredly, recounting a story, telling a tale, or inventing a fable does not resolve the aporias of temporal

[22] Ibid., 3:51.
[23] Ibid., 3:45.

experience on the conceptual level. Yet, temporal experience is effectively reorganized in narratives. Thus, the difficulties are surmounted, even if they are, properly speaking, not resolved. What has been characterized as 'a challenge lanced to the logic of the Same and the Other' is made *productive* by the reorganization of temporal experience in a synthesis of the heterogeneous, which results in a coherent narrative history.

In German this reorganization may be expressed by drawing a terminological distinction between *Zeiterlebnis* and *Zeiterfahrung*. In English we may delimit 'temporal experience' from 'immediate time-perception'. Indeed, the upshot of the refiguration of reality by narratives is the expression of a new kind of experience, which proves to be irreducible to any immediate time-perception (in the sense of a pure and simple *Zeiterlebnis*). Such a time-perception is reshaped and reworked by the narrative structures of language before it takes the form of a temporal experience that deserves its name. The outcome is, in each case, the *lively experience of a history*. In opposition to immediate time-perception, the experience of such a history is related to an extended present, in which the past is retained and the future anticipated.

In the European tradition of thought, time has repeatedly been represented as a *savage power*. What indeed is the work of time, if not death, disappearance, and irretrievable loss? However, the lively experience of a history shows that a temporal world can still be inhabited. Narratives are designed to *domesticate* the savage power of time. Refiguration of reality by narratives may be seen as an attempt at domestication.

It is, however, not difficult to see that Ricoeur's entire conception hinges on the idea that historicity is an inherent and all-encompassing feature of reality, which finds its proper expression in stories. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur takes inspiration from Hegel in order to buttress this assumption. To be sure, he expressly waives the Hegelian claim to grasp history in its totality. Yet, the whole inquiry into narrative refiguration ends by the delineation of a hermeneutics of historical consciousness, which is based on the idea of a perpetual effort of totalization in history. It is in this perspective that Ricoeur's attempt to reconcile subjective and objective time—or even of 'mortal' time and 'universal' time—in a third kind of temporality, called 'historical time', may be viewed.

However, in spite of all inspiration taken from Hegel, Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology remains separated by a gap from Hegel's speculative philosophy of history. In *Time and Narrative*, the revelation of the Real as History has nothing to do with the construction of a speculative system, but it remains the work of a piecemeal reorganization of temporal experience by singular

narratives. This difference marks a break with Hegel's philosophy of history. It is especially at two points that Ricoeur parts with Hegel's heritage:

(i) First, he insists that it is always a *lively experience of a history* that finds its expression in a narrative.
(ii) Second, he makes clear that there are always *different possible expressions* of such an experience in narratives.

The first of these two assertions excludes all speculative approaches to history. In Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology, narrative history remains within the horizon of actual life and lively experience. Even if historiography as a scientific endeavour transcends this horizon, a philosophical reassessment of historical knowledge necessarily returns to it. The second assertion adds that there is no narrative access to history as such. No single narrative (no *grand récit*) can claim to have grasped universal history. There is no history in the singular without a plurality of stories.

What follows, then, from these two basic principles concerning the notion of truth when applied to story-telling? Although narrative can be interpreted as an extended metaphor, narrative truth seems to be distinct from metaphorical truth. If story-telling reorganizes temporal experience by transforming it into a coherent history, then, by all appearances, its work is not exhausted by a redescription of reality. It has repeatedly been emphasized that reality is reshaped and even reworked by narratives. This observation suggests that the refiguration of temporal experience by story-telling goes beyond a mere redescription of reality.

However, we must not forget that the notion of refiguration is inseparable from the hermeneutical circle that underlies the investigations in *Time and Narrative*. This hermeneutical circle is hinted at also in the aforementioned principles, in which narrative is conceived of as the expression of the lively experience of a history in language. Here it is taken for granted that a narrative history can be *experienced* before it is *expressed in language*. Ricoeur assumes indeed that narrative is, in several ways, *pre-figured* or *pre-figurated* in reality. That is why the word 'history', as Hegel rightly points it out, can be taken to mean just as well a series of actions and events in reality (*res gestae*), as a particular linguistic expression of this series (*relatio rerum gestarum*). The point of the hermeneutical circle Ricoeur has in mind consists precisely in connecting the two meanings of the word 'history' with each other.

It is in this context that the question of a 'pre-narrative structure' of reality is raised in *Time and Narrative*. Alasdair MacIntyre claimed as early as 1981,

in his *After Virtue*, that "we live out narratives in our lives."[24] He went, however, as far as to hold that action—and even life in its whole history—is nothing else than an "enacted dramatic narrative."[25] Ricoeur rejects this view. He reproaches MacIntyre for having disregarded the distance between the experience of actual life and its expression in language. That is why Ricoeur restricts himself to the assumption of a 'pre-narrative structure' of lively existence. This assumption consists in considering action—and life in its whole history—not as an 'enacted narrative', but as a 'virtual story', as 'a story in its beginnings', or as a story that only is 'in its germ' in reality but that is, nevertheless, in search of a narrative.

Ricoeur provides a quite convincing argument for this claim by referring to Wilhelm Schapp's idea of histories that we find ourselves caught up, captured, or even enmeshed in. The assumption is that one has no access to another self independently of the stories this self is entangled in. Schapp, a former pupil of Husserl's, relies upon the experiences he gained as a professional attorney. It is always through an indictment that a culprit is encountered by an attorney. The allegations necessarily take the shape of stories. It is in the light of these stories that the accused is first envisaged by the attorney. Schapp generalizes these experiences by claiming that the emergence of another person in flesh and blood is only the emergence of his or her stories because another person's visage, his or her face, and his or her entire bodily appearance, may be said to tell stories, even if it tries to hide, to conceal, or to cover them up.[26] The histories a person is entangled—*verstrickt*—in are not necessarily narratives expressly told. Moreover, they can never be completely told because every history that is expressly narrated points back to a *Vorgeschichte*, a 'pre-history', that remains in the background. It is always from such a background of previous histories remaining untold that an expressly narrated history emerges. It is a person's lived experiences embedded into one another that form this background. When they emerge, the person's self becomes, at least to some extent, transparent. That is why Schapp says that history represents the person: "*Die Geschichte steht für den Mann*."[27] If this conception is right, then Ricoeur may, indeed, infer from it that narratives told about one's life are, so to speak, only 'con-

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24) A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1985), 212.

25) Ibid., 215.

26) W. Schapp, *In Geschichten verstrickt*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: B. Heymann Verlag, 1976), 100.

27) Ibid., 103ff.

tinuations' of the histories oneself is involved in and defined by. At the same time, one may extend the validity of this description with a certain right from personal history to the history of collective entities as well.

The upshot of these reflections is that narrative refiguration is not principally different from a redescription of reality. It is consequently not by accident that Ricoeur adheres to the equivalence of the two terms. If it is true that story-telling reshapes and reworks temporal experience, it is no less true that it *reveals* the *Real as History*. Far from being an act of invention or creation, this gesture of revelation may rather be interpreted as a redescription of reality.

Yet, the conception of a refiguration of reality urges us to revise the earlier notion of metaphorical truth from the standpoint of narrative. The novelty it brings with itself is related to the explicit elaboration of the hermeneutical circle from which it is inseparable. What a closer consideration of this hermeneutical circle makes clear is that the as-structure contained in the formula 'revelation of the Real *as* History' expresses the internal structure of lively experience. Lively experience can be considered as an event in which 'something turns out to be something (else)'. In this characterization of lively experience, the word 'else' is to be bracketed in order to indicate that what it means is a difference in identity. It is not difficult to see that this as-structure can only be properly expressed in a narrative. *What* we learn from our experiences may be formulated in statements or propositions; but *how* we learn from them is told in stories. From this it follows that, in a certain sense, narrative is the adequate expression of lively experience in language. This observation puts into question the pertinence of our former distinction between 'factual' and 'metaphorical' truth. Factual truth proves to be the product of an abstraction and idealization that settles the lesson drawn from an experience without recounting how this experience was gained. Even if Ricoeur does not formulate his insight in so many words, his investigations in *Time and Narrative* invite us to adopt the view that the original bearer of truth is not a statement or a proposition but a *lively experience* that finds its proper expression in *narratives*.

One should not think that such a view is necessarily committed to *irrationalism* because it extols an expression of truth that is characteristic of μῦθος rather than of λόγος. In reality, narrative is not devoid of rationality, even if its particular rationality remains distinct from the rationality of a reason that, like in Kant, gives laws to nature and moral life. Assuredly, such a legislative rationality cannot be found in narratives. But, just like metaphor, narrative *gives to think*, too; it even urges us to *think more* at the conceptual level. In other words, it invites a break with inveterated figures of thought and leads up to a

particular way of thinking. We may describe the rationality of such a thinking, using a term coined by Bernhard Waldenfels, as a *responsive* rationality. This rationality is obviously different from that of a legislative reason in the Kantian sense of this word. It is the distinctive feature of a thinking that is capable of learning from experience and its expression in language and art.

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Recognizing Ricoeur: In Memoriam

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Abstract
My aim in this memorial paper is to recall two essential Ricoeurean themes that underlie his entire philosophical orientation and that respond well to specific challenges today from postmodern deconstruction. At question is whether Ricoeur's account of sign in language and the living present in time can adequately respond to and meet the recent challenge from postmodern deconstruction, which radically challenges the very root of his phenomenological and hermeneutic orientation: the priority of the semantic in language and the priority of the living present. Although Ricoeur and Derrida will be seen to address the same problems of decentering consciousness, their accounts, although agreeing on important issues, quickly become mutually exclusive and deconstruction becomes a challenge to Ricoeurean hermeneutics. I will turn first to the postmodern deconstruction of Jacques Derrida before turning to Ricoeur's response with a more viable view of language, sense, and lived time.

Keywords
Ricoeur, hermeneutics, lived time, deconstruction, originary

One day some decades ago, while waiting in the Atlanta airport for a flight to Lynchburg, Virginia, for a philosophy conference, I spotted someone in the same waiting room who seemed somewhat familiar. I was not sure at first, but finally recognized Paul Ricoeur. At the time, although quite familiar with his work, I did not know him very well, but went up to speak to him anyway. Today I would like to recognize Ricoeur again in a different and more philosophical way. To recognize such an accomplished thinker and exceptional person, we can employ only a loose sense of recognition that he develops in his most recent work.[1]

My aim is very, very limited. I will simply attempt to recall a couple of essential Ricoeurean themes that underlie much of his philosophical

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

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orientation[2] and that respond well to specific challenges today from postmodern deconstruction. At question is whether Ricoeur's account of sign in language and the living present in time can adequately respond to and meet the recent challenge from postmodern deconstruction, which challenges the very root of his phenomenological and hermeneutic orientation: the priority of the semantic in language and the priority of the living present. For, this challenge is radical. Although Ricoeur and Derrida will be seen to address the same problems of decentering consciousness, their accounts, although agreeing on important issues, quickly become mutually exclusive and deconstruction becomes a challenge to Ricoeurean hermeneutics. If this challenge cannot be adequately met, then hermeneutics, phenomenology, and philosophy itself become subverted. I will turn first to the postmodern deconstruction of Jacques Derrida before turning to Ricoeur's response to these positions with a more viable view of language, sense, and lived time. I want now to indicate the contrasting ways in which Ricoeur and deconstruction overcome logocentrism and presence as extreme positions.

Although Ricoeur and Derrida both are intent on decentering and deposing the Cartesian Cogito and intuition as well as Husserl's adaptation of them, they do so in entirely different and somewhat incompatible ways. They do agree in their fundamental opposition to the logocentrism of Descartes and Husserl, but Ricoeur, from his very earliest writings, does this without losing phenomenological primordiality, the priority of the semantic over the semiotic, and the place of the living present in relation to retentions and protentions and the now punctum. Thus, his position seems at the outset to be opposed to that of Derrida and deconstruction. This opposition is clear if the changeover by deconstruction entails a priority of the discrete in time, the semiotic constitution in language, and the loss of phenomenological primordiality, one won only after great labor at the beginning of the phenomenological movement, and not abrogated in its existential and hermeneutical or dialogical phases.

Derrida's view of trace, central to his views of language and experience, hinges on his critiques of Saussure's and Husserl's views of sign as well as on his critique of Husserl's view of the living present, making trace central to language at the core of his deconstruction. It can be seen that Ricoeur's view of language, taking its point of departure from a more radical critique of Saussure and structuralism than that of Derrida, together with his radical critique

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[2] Paul Ricoeur picks up on these same themes in his recent *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); cf. especially pages 31–36.

of Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's living present, offers a more stable view of the living present and of time than Derrida's and is thus able to support a richer and more viable view of trace, language, and linguistics.

Such deconstruction emerges in response to structuralism, which itself is spawned against the background of the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. It equally arises out of Husserl's phenomenology of language and challenges any philosophy that makes central the semantic within semiotics and the symbolic in human behavior.

Although radically different from one another in direction, structuralism and deconstruction share a certain philosophical viewpoint regarding sign theory, pitting them together in principle against a fuller view of signs and steering them into what has been referred to as "semeiological reductionism."[3] This puts deconstruction in a position closer to that of structuralism than to Ricoeur's confrontation of that challenge several decades ago. The philosophical presuppositions of semeiological reductionism, for which, within language, the reference, fullness of sense, and subject are lost, challenge the very sense of any phenomenology of language, excluding its possibility and thus its survival as phenomenology or hermeneutics. Saussure and Lévi-Strauss interpret signs as unities in relation to other signs in the whole system or network, resulting in a view of the constitution of signs (words) that precludes signification and a speaking subject and that excludes a phenomenology of speech.[4] Signification and a subject have little place in such a theory of language, thus, according to Ricoeur, levying a challenge to phenomenology: "The challenge consists in this, that the notion of signification is placed in a field other than the intentional aim of a subject."[5]

Derrida's view of signs, springing from his analyses of Saussure and Husserl, considers signs to be separate from immediacy with things, reflecting the Husserlian reduction, which he carries further in the direction of Saussure. Derrida

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3) This term "semeiological reductionism" is taken from Martin Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 178. It should be noted that the term semiotics is used differently by Europeans and by Americans. In large measure, what Ricoeur wants to include in language, and accuses Saussure of separating out of language, the American philosophers retain in a fuller semiotics, which is not reductionistic.

4) Martin Dillon contends that Saussure does not himself exclude the extra-linguistic and that his thought is compatible with that development, which his followers do pursue. See: *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 181.

5) Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 246; hereafter cited as *CI*.

focuses on the initial distinction made by Saussure regarding the constitution of the sign into signifier and signified, analyses and disagrees with that interpretation of the relation between the signified and thought and consequently the relation between the signifier and the signified. For him, the signified is not to be equated with the concept, nor is the concept independent of the signifier, as he says in denying that a concept can be "simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of a relationship to a system of signifiers."[6] Rather, the meaning of the sign emerges from its difference from other signs, and the signified can itself become a signifier, thus showing the collapse of the radical distinction made by Saussure between signifier as the material or physical image and signified as thought or concept expressed. "No element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each 'element'—phoneme or grapheme—being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system."[7] The meaning of a sign, rather than immediately present, as Husserl and Saussure thought, is constituted by a "tissue of differences," a network of referrals, and every so-called simple term is marked by the trace of another term.

Hence, the "presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority. It is always already carried outside itself. It already differs (from itself) before any act of expression."[8] Thus, no particular sign can be considered to refer to any particular signified, a sign cannot have a unique meaning (it is undecidable), and the system of signifiers cannot be escaped. That we cannot escape the system of signifiers and that no particular sign can be considered to refer to any particular signified leads to the conclusion that there is no presence to meaning in the usual sense within language; no presence to consciousness or to things. Rather meaning transpires in the "play that is the web of language."[9] Thus, Derrida can be seen to deny the accessibility of the present and of presence. For everything transpires within language constituted by the network or system of signifiers and is locked within that system. There is no escape from the system of signifiers. Since this is the case, there is no presence. This extreme conclusion follows from Derrida's dichotomy between total presence and dire alterity, not allowing any middle ground. This

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6) Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 19.

7) *Positions*, 26–27.

8) *Positions*, 33.

9) Hilary Lawson, *Reflexivity: The Post-modern Predicament* (La Salle: Open Court, 1985), 100.

denial of presence reveals the priority of writing over speech. For, speech is already bound into the network of signifiers, taking it beyond the so-called purity of its immediately present meaning. Instead of the meaning of a sign as immediately present, it is disseminated throughout the system of signifiers. Thus, the priority that has been accorded to speech over writing, or phonocentrism, is a result of the view of presence and the present; with the denial of these, there is a concomitant denial of the priority of speech over writing.

In thus considering the signifier to be independent of a relation to any particular signified but, rather, to be related to other signifiers in relations of difference, and in considering the system of signifiers as inescapable, Derrida has effectively cut off presence and the present now, moving instead to a view of language from which meaning, in a different sense from that of any usual semantics, emerges. For, his deconstruction begins with the subordination of semantics in the traditional sense to syntax, and the development of a view of syntax quite different from its usual sense. The semantic dimension emerges from such a view of syntax as the root of the formal dimension of language. Thus, Derrida subscribes to a new and far more radical sense of syntax than that of syntax as form in contrast to content. Rather, for him, syntax is the condition making meaningful language possible and, at once, is itself productive of the semantic dimension of language. This has been referred to as a "syntax of syntax" from which the "formal syntactic properties can be syntactically composed and decomposed."[10] This reduction to syntax liberates the signifier from the "oppressive regime"[11] of presence as immediacy and at once ties it to the time flux over against structure or meaning. For, if syntax is prior to semantics and there is a "syntax of syntax,"[12] then the flux of syntax, the diachronic dimension, is in no way tied to or subordinated to semantics or to meaning or to the structure of the system of language. Rather, it generates a kind of meaning in the very positioning of such words as "green is or,"[13] thus

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[10] Rodolphe Gasché "Infrastructures and Systematicity," in *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, ed. J. Sallis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 11–12.

[11] John Caputo, "The Economy of Signs in Husserl and Derrida," in ibid., 105.

[12] "Infrastructures and Systematicity," 12.

[13] "The expressions 'green is or' and 'abracadabra' are but 'isolation[s] of this structure and hence a welcome *liberation* from the rule of intuitionism, a liberation which is in fact made possible by the reduction of the rules of a priori grammar.... This reduction... *liberates* the signifier from the oppressive regime of intuitionism and its unfair demand that every signifier lead to Being, presence, objectivity, even when such demands cannot be met. Intuitionism exacts a tax which no one can pay" ("The Economy of Signs in Husserl and Derrida," 104–5).

moving away from structuralism in favor of the flux underlying meaning and language. But it has lost the continuity, duration, and depth of lived time. Thus syntax is the condition making meaningful language possible and at once, for the deconstructionist, is productive of the semantic dimension of language. Thus it is clear that Derrida goes far beyond simply decentering presence and has completely deposed [deconstructed] it. This recourse to the flux entails the centrality of time in relation to signs. What must be investigated further is the denial of presence and of the present-now in the deconstruction of Husserl's living present and that denial's latent view of time, resulting further in the deconstructionist view of signs and language.

Time and the Living Present

Some of the most scrutinized passages by deconstructionists, in recent attention to Husserl's analyses of time, are the passages where the distinction between the living present and the instant or the punctual-now is made. What will be of importance to glean from Derrida's deconstruction, however, is his implicit understanding of time and the way in which his implicit point of reference structures his own deconstructionist position, for his approach here provides the basis from which he pulls the rug out from under not only the phenomenology of Husserl, but, indeed, all philosophy.

Husserl's account of internal time, it must be recalled, addresses the Humean problem of consciousness that is constituted by a flux of nows discrete from one another and which, as unidimensional, allows for no depth. Against this backdrop, Husserl specifically focuses upon the duration in consciousness of an object as the same from moment to moment. His analysis of the temporal constitution of consciousness reveals the object correlate within consciousness and the protentions or anticipations, and retentions or sedimentations, which constitute a network of intentionalities. Thus Husserl's own focus in dealing with the living present is that of duration in the "sense of the continuation of the same,"[14] and in this context he insists on a non-discrete interpretation of time. Just as objects are meaningfully perceived, without explanation needing to collapse or decompose them into discrete impressions, so too here, the living present is lived as a whole, an already given unity with a certain uniqueness

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[14] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 26. Hence forth this work will be referred to within the text as *TN*, followed by the volume and page.

to the status of protentions and retentions. For example, the loud sound of a ping, the kind a submarine makes in measuring distances, even though it might be heard as an instantaneous percussion, is grasped in an enduring and continuous consciousness. The sound resonates "in our ears," one might say. Husserl's treatment attempts to account for the "tempo-object"[15] as continuously present in some sense in duration. He describes the retentions and protensions as constitutive elements of consciousness that show how the present moment endures or continues in consciousness even though it has receded into a deeper phase and how anticipations grasp in some sense the upcoming moment. Retention as funded and protension as anticipatory reveal the depth of consciousness in its continuity and make presence of the object possible. It is precisely this continuity and oneness between the beginning of the tempo-object within consciousness, which Husserl calls the instant, and its duration that provide the context for his schema of retentions and protentions.

Husserl's account of the living present entails a thickness to the "now," containing retentions and protentions in a quasi immediacy that does not require, and is to be radically distinguished from, a separate act of remembering that would attempt to repeat and reproduce the occurrence. Rather, the retention and consequent endurance can be considered a kind of primary memory, a presence that is not the result of productive imagination yielding a separate act of repetition. Yet, for Husserl, retention is not incorporated in presence as the beginning of the object's presence in perception. Thus the living present is a sort of "thick now," including the retentions in a mode of presence not the same as that of the now in the narrow sense of the beginning in consciousness of an object. Yet the "thick now" is continuous with the "narrow now" and with it is already a unity, and thus does not require synthesis. These different modes must be made more explicit, for therein lies an ambiguity in Husserl's own account, which Derrida exploits.

Husserl's analysis of the beginning point, or the narrow now, of something appearing in time consciousness leaves a tension between it and the living present, or thick now, thus lending itself to the interpretation of the "instant as a point."[16] But, for Husserl, the fact that the living present contains retention does not mean that it is past in the strictest sense. For the retention is

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15) Ibid.

16) Derrida considers Husserl's view of this instant as a point to be a pivotal concept for his phenomenology, as he says: "we cannot avoid noting that a certain concept of the 'now', of the present as punctuality of the instant, discretely but decisively sanctions the whole system of 'essential distinctions'.... This spread is nonetheless thought and described on the basis of the

past, but still as part of the living present, and thus is entirely different from the past in a strict sense as a repetition. To break this retention off from the living present is to render this phase of consciousness discontinuous and therefore discrete, a doctrine certainly alien to Husserl. Yet, Husserl could be misinterpreted as not entirely ridding himself of the instant as discrete, which would make difficult his attempt to deal with experience as enduring within a continuum of duration. And, although it is explicitly clear that the now in Husserl's account cannot be collapsed into the point-like instant, the ambiguity of his treatment of the instant here gives rise to this tension between the instant, or punctual now, and the living present, which tension Derrida will be seen to exploit, thus loosing the depth and thickness belonging to the living present.[17]

It is precisely in the duration of this "thick now" that Derrida wants to wedge a separation, making two alien and discrete parts. Derrida's deconstruction of the distinction between the living present and the instant, or the punctual now, reveals an alleged contradiction, based on the above tension latent in Husserl's view of retentions and protentions in the living present. It is through Husserl's conception of the instant within the living present that Derrida identifies and deconstructs presence, as we shall now see.

Derrida questions and deconstructs the privilege of this living present and its identity in the realization that, with a point "now," the presence of the perceived present can appear as such only inasmuch as it contains retention as a nonpresence and a nonperception. He acknowledges that Husserl's text shows that perceiving has retention as a modification of the present. He agrees that Husserl calls this a perception in the context of distinguishing retention from reproduction and imagination; that for Husserl the retention is considered part of the presentation, and primary remembrance is perception in distinguishing it from secondary memory and production of the imagination (*SP*, 64–65). Yet, Derrida goes on to show that, for Husserl, "perception (impression) would be the phase of consciousness which constitutes the pure now,

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self-identity of the now as point, as a 'source-point'" (Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays of Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison and Newton Bercer [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973], 61; hereafter cited as *SP*).

17) *SP*, 60. Although Derrida exploits this latent tension within Husserl's account between the "instant as a point" (ibid.) and the thickness and depth of the present, he is aware that, in spite of this tension, Husserl himself is explicitly convinced that no "now" can be isolated as a pure instant, a pure punctuality (ibid., 61–62).

and memory every other phase of the continuity" (*SP*, 65). Thus, retention is considered nonpresence similar to the nonpresence of secondary memory.

According to Derrida's critique of Husserl, then, primary remembrance must be considered to be the "antithesis of perception" (*SP*, 64). Using Husserl's own texts to show the contradiction with his own earlier assertions, Derrida remarks: "As soon as we admit this continuity of the now and the not-now, perception and nonperception, . . . in the primordial retention, we admit the other into the self-identity of the *Augenblick*" (*SP*, 65); nonpresent and nonevidence are admitted into the thick now. This relation to nonpresence, according to Derrida, "radically destroys any possibility of a simple self-identity. And this holds in depth for the constituting flux itself" (*SP*, 66). The fact that nonpresence and otherness are internal to presence strikes it down.

Derrida puts the nonperception and nonpresence of retention on the same side as that of reproduction, thus placing an alterity within the living present. "The difference between retention and reproduction, between primary and secondary memory, is not the radical difference Husserl wanted between perception and nonperception; it is rather a difference between two modifications of nonperception" (*SP*, 65). For Derrida, the presence of the present is the result of the "bending back of a return" (*SP*, 66), of repetition, of *différance* (*SP*, 142). Thus, for Derrida, as he says: "this pure difference, which constitutes the self-presence of the living present, introduces into self-presence from the beginning all the impurity putatively excluded from it. The living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. It is always already a trace" (*SP*, 85). And it is precisely in this difference between the instant and the living present that the trace and language are appropriated, revealing another aspect of the living present more explicitly. In fact, it is the relation to nonpresence that actually "makes possible" (*SP*, 66) the presence of the perceived present. Even the instant gains its identity from its relation to nonpresence or nonperception. This move again goes far beyond a decentering of presence, loses continuity and duration, and goes to an opposite extreme, one that Husserl's own extremes aim to overcome. Must one admit only an absolute identity or an absolute alterity? Is not this a thick identity or a thick now, even though it is not an absolute identity?

This nonpresence is the place of the trace, for protention and retention are traces that come to constitute the living present. The living present, then, springs forth out of this nonidentity with itself and from the sketched-out-ahead of the future and the retained sketch of the immediate past, constituting what Derrida refers to as the intimate relation with its "outside"

(*SP*, 86) as an openness to exteriority. The living present takes on the role of "power of synthesis" and of the "incessant gathering up of traces" (*SP*, 147). And it is *différance* that "makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be 'present', appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a further element" (*SP*, 142). These traces then, of the future and of the past as protentions and as retentions, constitute the present by its relation "to what it is not" (*SP*, 143), i.e., the trace constitutes the present by its relation to what it is not—as a future or past—and as such not even as a modified present. It is precisely this living present constituted as a non simple and derived effect, as a synthesis of traces, retentions, and projections, which Ricoeur refers to as losing phenomenological primordiality. And the use of language involves the play of differences, the play of traces of future and past, to bring about the present and its presence. This play of traces is a "sort of inscription prior to writing, a protowriting without a present origin" (*SP*, 146). Thus, for Derrida, the trace is in some illusive sense the origin "of sense in general," it is the "*différance* which opens appearance [*l'apparaître*]."[18] Thus it can be seen that for Derrida, a certain alterity becomes dominant, while for Ricoeur, its place is not so central.

This deconstructive account of sign, trace, and the living present can now be contrasted with a richer and more viable account of language and time, that of Ricoeur's. The possibility of his account rests on a completely opposed view of sign, (language), time and trace. It is Ricoeur's views on these issues, as will be seen, that makes possible his ongoing theory of hermeneutics.

Paul Ricoeur: Semantic Priority and the Living Present

Ricoeur considers the project of the linguistics that leads to structuralism and deconstruction to be misdirected in that language as discourse, the saying of something to someone, is lost. Ricoeur has constantly insisted on taking language as discourse in his attempts to interarticulate a phenomenology of language with a semeiological approach. This insistence is based on a radical disagreement with Ferdinand de Saussure's fundamental distinction between *la langue* and *la parole*, which does not leave room for language as discourse:

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[18] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 65.

"the withdrawal of the problem of discourse in the contemporary study of language is the price we must pay for the tremendous achievements brought about by the famous *Cours de linguistique générale* of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure."[19] Ricoeur's disagreement with this distinction between *la langue* and *la parole*, more radical than the critique of Saussure by Derrida regarding signifier and signified, emerges in his attempt to go beyond the opposition between semeiology and the phenomenology of language. He considers the unity of language [*le langage*] fundamental to both, unifying them in a hierarchy of levels: "To think language [*le langage*] should be to think the unity of that very reality which Saussure has disjoined—the unity of language [*la langue*] and speech [*la parole*]" (*CI*, 85). Thus, in order to overcome the opposition by an interarticulation in language, Ricoeur bases his view on a unity of language that does justice to both the semeiology that takes *la langue* as an object as well as to a phenomenology of speech. His intent is to avoid that initial separation between language [*la langue*] and speech [*la parole*] as a false dichotomy. The new unity must at the same time allow for the possibility of viewing language as an object of science and, at once, also allow for the event of communication. Consequently, he looks for a unity that surpasses the opposition between these aspects of language, thereby making possible an interarticulation between them.

The new unity of language, reaching the crux of the confrontation, is put on the side of semantics and gives semantics, rather than semeiology and syntax, the primordial role in language theory and hermeneutics. There are several reasons for understanding this unity to lie on the side of discourse, function, and semantics. First, all sciences of language presuppose, at least implicitly, the semantic function. Further, by recognizing the priority of the semantic unity in the sentence, both sides of the antinomy or opposition can be articulated; and, finally, this semantic unity in the sentence reveals the possibility and the sense of an articulation of the hierarchical levels of language. "In short, the linking of methods, of points of view, of models, is a consequence of the hierarchy of levels in the work of language" (*CI*, 80). This hierarchy of levels, in spite of a break within them, makes possible the interarticulation of various approaches. As Ricoeur states: "My whole study will rest on the idea that the passage to the new unity of discourse constituted by the sentence or enunciation represents a break, a change, in the hierarchy of levels" (*CI*, 80). And to

[19] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1966), 2–3.

understand this hierarchy of levels, along with the break, it is necessary to consider the fundamental point at the center of Ricoeur's reflection that demands this change in the unity of language (*le langage*).

The strength of Ricoeur's position rests on the insight that the sciences of language presuppose a semantic function that they do not make thematic but that, when excluded, gives rise to the closed system of signs. This system of signs must be opened to bring to light what the sciences of language presuppose. Changing the unity of language to the semantic makes necessary a passage from structure to function.[20] It also makes apparent the semantic dimension of the sign, of which structuralists and deconstructionists alike have lost sight.

The word as the point of articulation of various levels of language calls for a distinction between the sign in semeiology or syntax and the sign in semantics. On the one hand, the sign is in a sense "meaningless" in the semeiology of structuralism and deconstruction. On the other hand, the sign is word in semantics. "Words are the point of articulation of the semiological and the semantic in each event of speech" (*TN* 3: 93). However, semantics cannot accept the closure of the sign system, which, as such, is the overextension of a method and theory. Semeiology can be considered to reveal adequately the root of symbolic function and of polysemy, but an adjustment is required within semeiology in interpreting the relation between diachrony and synchrony, due to the surplus or surcharge of sense and the semantic regulation of the context. On this point, Ricoeur and Derrida are in partial agreement. Reflection on the closure of the sign system reveals how the meaningful use of signs as words does not allow for a closed system but, rather, demands an openness of the sign system at a different but more essential level. At this level, signs have a reference function and a manifesting function, thus pointing to and standing for things.

As expressions, signs show or reveal the world and, at once, manifest or posit the subject. The semiological sign system of structuralism and deconstruction cannot do adequate justice to this aspect of sign since, on the level of system, there is no saying of something about something nor a positing of the I who appropriates language in speaking. The uniqueness of the I and of the situation or occasion of the speaker and of the speaking (e.g., tense, demonstratives) go beyond the limits of this level.

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[20] Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973): 134. This article also appears in the anthology of Ricoeur's articles, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap. 4.

In thus favoring a diachronic process over synchronic structure, Ricoeur is somewhat in agreement with Derrida, for whom the movement of the play of differences entails the process, but for whom also the structural and process dimensions are equally derivative from *différance*. In order to further the dialogue between Ricoeur and Derrida, the discussion must now turn to the place of trace and time in Ricoeur's view of language, in order to clarify how, for him, trace counters a phenomenology that "confuses the living present with the point-like instant" (*TN* 3: 283 n. 12), i.e., that of Derrida. First, however, Ricoeur's own critique of phenomenology's internal time consciousness must be considered as the general context for his critique of Derrida's view of the living present and the now. Thus, attention must now be given to the aporia of lived and cosmic time that Ricoeur addresses in the three volumes of *Time and Narrative*.

Lived Time, Cosmic Time, and Historical Time

Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* is constructed around the aporetic of time witnessed in the accounts of internal time and reaching an "extreme degree of aporia"[21] in phenomenology, a consideration raised initially by Augustine, whose treatment of time presented the aporia of internal time, and later developed by Husserl and Heidegger.[22] Ricoeur is insistent on the inadequacy of this account to deal with cosmic time. And it is precisely this aporia between phenomenological time and cosmic time that history, with its manifold connections, brings together, bridging the gap between internal time and cosmic time.

Historical time, then, bridges the chasm between internal time and cosmic time by means of its connections: calendar time is the first of the connectors, joining astronomical time with human institutions, harmonizing "work with days and festivals with the season and the years. It integrates the community and its customs into the cosmic order."[23] The second connector, the notion of the sequence of generations, shown in the transmission of biblical curses and blessing from generation to generation, results from the connection between

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21) Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," *Philosophy Today* 29, no. 4/4 (Winter, 1985): 261.

22) For a fuller account of the aporetics of temporality, see Part 4 of *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, sec. 1. The first statement of the aporia marks the very beginning of *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, part 1.

23) "Narrated Time," 263. For a clear and full account of historical time and these connectors, see: *Time and Narrative*, 3: 104–26.

lived time and biological time, which underlies it and connects it with astronomical time. This grounding of lived time on biological time "is thus added to the inscription of lived time upon astronomical time."[24] The third connector is implied by history's recourse to documents and monuments. Here Ricoeur appropriates the sense of trace employed by F. Simiand in defining history as knowledge by traces. Because of its mixed nature, the trace, according to Ricoeur, is a connector between lived time and physical time. The trace exists as such now, but it is a remnant or a vestige of something from another world as, for instance, documents or monuments. Further, it is a remnant, a vestige, a window to something that was in a past world. As Ricoeur says, "A trace, then, is a present thing which stands for [*vaut*] an absent past."[25] Or, it is also both "a remains and a sign of what was but no longer is" (*TN* 3: 5). For Ricoeur, the trace's double allegiance to different temporal orders is an original phenomenon that Heidegger's account, focusing on having-been of Dasein, does not adequately account for.

But by this very advance, phenomenology creates aporias. Ricoeur considers this failure to cover the problematic of time adequately in its entirety to have begun with Augustine's attempt to derive the Aristotelian cosmic time from "the simple distention of the soul hit up against the Aristotelian reef: referring time to movement and to the root of movement, the accomplishment of the unaccomplished of *phusis*."[26] Similarly, the Husserlian attempt to deal with time as a pure experience by putting aside objective time "strikes another reef, that Kantian one: it is from Kant that we learned that time as such is invisible, that it could not appear in any living experience, that it is always presupposed as the condition of experience, and from this fact could only appear indirectly on objects apprehended in space and according to the schemata and the categories of objectivity."[27] According to Ricoeur, it is this constraint that shows why internal time-consciousness borrows its structure from this objective time that the reduction holds in suspense.[28] For Ricoeur, there is a disproportion between time that we unfold in living and time that envelops us everywhere.

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24) "Narrated Time," 264.

25) Ibid.

26) Ibid., 262.

27) Ibid.

28) Even Heidegger's treatment of time with its levels of temporalization reveals most completely this inability. "But this very effort comes up against *the other* of phenomenological time: the

With this critique of the phenomenology of time in view, the discussion can now turn to Ricoeur's defense of Husserl's living present against the onslaught of Derrida in order to see what it means for him to say that he agrees with Derrida in a positive way about trace, but that his own view of trace, seen above, "can only counter a phenomenology which confuses the living present with the point-like instant."

Ricoeur's perceptive and penetrating reading of Husserl's account of internal time-consciousness focuses on two central points that are often overlooked or contradicted in deconstructive interpretation:[29] first, that Husserl's inner time-consciousness is a continuum containing continuance, a fact that Ricoeur quite correctly makes central—and it is necessary to emphasize this point, since this character of Husserl's account has recently sunk into oblivion; and second, that the overall problem that is addressed and which retention solves is that of duration as such. Further, according to Ricoeur, two of the "great discoveries of Husserlian phenomenology of time" are, first, the description of retention and protention and, second, the distinction between retention and recollection (or between primary and secondary memory), both of which have been seen above (*TN* 3: 24, 26–27). With the reduction, objective time is bracketed and the lived experience of time itself comes into focus. Ricoeur adds that:

> it is the tempo-object as a reduced object that provides its telos to the investigation. And it is this tempo-object that indicates what has to be constituted in the sphere of pure immanence, namely, duration, in the sense of the continuation of the same throughout the succession of other phases. We may deplore the ambiguity of this strange entity, yet we owe it an analysis of time that is straightway an analysis of duration in the sense of continuation, of 'continuance considered as such' (*Verharren als solches*) and not simply of succession. (*TN* 3: 24, 26)

'popular' concept of time, made up of an infinite series of indifferent nows. Even the most decentered level of temporality—within-time-ness—where the 'in' of being in time is highlighted, never rejoins the 'ordinary' time which is simply removed from the phenomenological field by the allegation of an enigmatic leveling of the 'in' of 'within-time-ness'" ("Narrated Time," 264). Ricoeur considers Heidegger's attempt to include the history of time from Aristotle to Hegel in this ordinary time to be in vain.

[29] Ricoeur, in the context of indicating a "homonymy," makes a statement that fixes his focus on the central tenet coming out of Husserl's descriptive account of internal time-consciousness: "that the phenomenologist cannot avoid admitting,… a certain homonymy between the 'flow of consciousness' and the 'Objective flow of time'; or, again, between the 'one after the other' of immanent time and the succession of objective time; or yet, again, the continuum of the one and that of the other" (*Time and Narrative*, 3: 24).

Ricoeur insists throughout this account of Husserl that the "now" for Husserl cannot be considered a "point-like instant" (*TN* 3: 26) but, rather, includes what Husserl calls longitudinal intentionality in contrast to transcendent intentionality. Ricoeur sees the phenomenological description shifting attention from the "sound that endures to the modes of its continuance" (*TN* 3: 27) precisely as the unity of duration (*Dauereinheit*). Thus, for Husserl, no synthetic function is necessary, since the unity is already there. Ricoeur keeps to a rather perceptive and true account of the sense of "the sound still resonates," emphasizing that the "still" implies both same and other; he quotes Husserl: "The sound itself is the same, but 'in the way that' it appears, the sound is continually different" (*TN* 3: 27–28). The reversal in perspective from the sound to the "mode of appearing" (*der ton 'in der Weise wie'*) (*TN* 3: 27–28) brings the aspect of otherness into the foreground and transforms it into an enigma. Ricoeur, however, follows Husserl in that this otherness does not exclude some sense of identity. It is the longitudinal intentionality that ensures the continuity of the duration and preserves the same in the other and that marks the continuity of the whole or the totality of the continuous, which the term duration (*Dauer*) itself designates (*TN* 3: 29). The identity resulting from this something that persists in change is an identity of temporal totality rather than one of logic.

According to Ricoeur's analysis of Husserl's texts, modification precedes difference. Husserl indicates by the term modification that the privileged status of each new now is shared by the series of instants that it retains. The difference is between the "recent present and the past properly speaking" (*TN* 3: 30). With the modification of the present into the recent present, the "originary impression itself passes into the retention."(ibid.)

A second distinction proper to the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness is that between primary remembrance and secondary remembrance, or recollection. "The break separating the presentation, which alone is an original self-giving act, from re-presentation further confirms the primacy of retention." For Ricoeur, highlighting this distinction, the question that haunts Husserl is this: "if the way in which recollection presentifies the past differs fundamentally from the presence of the past retention, how can a representation be faithful to its object?" (*TN* 3: 34). Thus Ricoeur's interpretation of Husserl recognizes and emphasizes the great difference between retention and recollection, which will become central to his pithy remarks on Derrida's interpretation (or misinterpretation) of this relation.

Ricoeur considers Derrida to stress the "subversive aspect of this solidarity between the living present and retention as regards the primacy of the *Augen-*

blick, hence the point-like present, identical to itself" (*TN* 3: 283 n. 12). While Ricoeur takes into account Husserl's "strong sense" given to the distinction between the present and the instant, he is firmly opposed to placing the nonperception of retention on the same side of otherness as that of recollection, since retention is seen in phenomenological description to be essentially different from recollection. Retention is continuous with perception, while recollection is, in the "strong sense" of the word, a nonperception. A similar critique could be levied against Derrida's interpretation of retention as nonpresence. For Ricoeur's interpretation agrees that the nonpresence of retention is not to be equated with the nonpresence of second memory, or recollection.

Thus, according to Ricoeur's interpretation, retention, rather than primarily a secondary memory in accordance with Derrida's "semiological reduction,"[30] essentially shares in primary memory and thus does not need repetition. Rather, it is retained and as such is present, although not absolutely intuited or identical with the beginning of the object in consciousness of which it is the endurance or retention in the mode of continuing. This beginning point must be interpreted as a thin now rather than as a pin point or an atom of time, for in the concrete flow of experience the instant point of time is an abstraction. This is precisely the element of the tension between the instant and the living present that Husserl's text obscures and that Derrida exploits. Husserl, however, as has been seen, focuses on duration with a view to accounting for continuance. Thus, in his phenomenology of internal time, he does not produce a view of consciousness or time constitution in which they are discrete.

Derrida, in picking up on the wrong side of this tension between the living present and the instant in Husserl's ambiguous treatment, has given rise to some equivocation regarding the "unity of a temporal present."[31] While for Husserl this unity involves the thick now, and thus also a continuity and depth to the living present, for Derrida's deconstructive interpretation it involves the now as an instant, because of his own presupposition of the discrete view of time. Derrida's analysis entails this utilization of a discreteness of time, which leads him to consider the living present, the living now, within a discrete view of a flux with no depth, a pseudo continuum of discrete points. Hence, for Derrida, Husserl's "thick now" or "big now" (*TN* 3: 28) collapses in the face of the alterity of past and future, revealing the failure of Husserl's time constitution. In rejecting presence, Derrida has focused on the flux of time as

30) Caputo, "The Economy of Signs in Husserl and Derrida," 101.
31) Ibid., 60.

discrete and represented or repeated. For Derrida "signification is formed only within the hollow of differance: of discontinuity and of discreteness, of the diversion and the reserve of what does not appear."[32] *Différance* can thus be seen to make signification possible because of the interval that separates the present from alterity. In this way nothing precedes *différance*.[33] What becomes clear is that if one begins with discreteness, the only alternatives are either pure identity or dire alterity. If one rejects, as Derrida rightly does, the alternative of pure identity, then his deconstructive stance is the logical conclusion.

What has been lost in favor of this superimposed discrete time is the lived time as the sense of human concrete existence, which, as such, is continuous, has duration, and moves as a whole. Derrida, exploiting the ambiguous status of the instant in Husserl's analysis, has excluded the living present as the focal point of sense and has lost sight of the "unity of a temporal present" as precisely constitutive of the living present and not of an instant. For, the instant as such does not exist, since it is an abstraction from the continuum, or at best, as Husserl uses the term, merely the occasion within the continuum for the beginning or starting point of something in an experience. But, if the instant now is discrete and isolated, then the instant is a vacuous point discretely cut off from any other instant and the trace is separated from it. Indeed, all the elements at this instant are the constituted effects or products, none of which are present. And the system as a whole at any moment is constituted by the interrelation of all the elements. Protentions and retentions, since they are constituted effects, cannot bring about the required unity but, rather, presuppose it. How is the trace to cross over from one empty now point to another? It is not connected to any, except insofar as it is in the rich present state as a trace of a past with no present. Can such crossing over the gaps or chasms between instants be allowed by the absolute presuppositions of this deconstructive view of the system of signs and trace? Since the trace is itself an effect, it cannot bring about a unity of instants except as itself an effected synthesis. Yet such a unity must preexist trace for its very possibility, for trace involves more than the instant.

A discrete instant is not sufficient to support any workable view of trace, phenomenology, or hermeneutics. Discreteness of the instant of time cannot support any connection between two times or two instants of time. For Derrida, there cannot be any such unity between two now points any more than

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[32] *Of Grammatology*, 69.

[33] *Positions*, 28.

for Hume there could be real connection or an identity established between two now points discretely cut off from one another. Thus, Derrida's view of the instant and the discreteness that it entails cannot support any viable trace within human experience, which is his main tool for any working role for signs. For, trace must assume an already unified present entailing two times, the past somehow in the present. It must be present as a past that is no more and yet is really present, even if only as a trace of the past, but not as a constituted effect in an empty instant.

The notion of trace in this contemporary philosophy has taken on a role central both to language and to the living present as well as to the relation between internal time consciousness and cosmic time. In Derrida's deconstruction, traces are constitutive of the sign in the same way that the protentions and retentions as traces are constitutive of the living present. The prominence of trace in deconstruction follows largely from the loss of phenomenological primordiality of, and the decentering of focus from, the living present, presence, and things present as constituted to what constitutes them—the play of *différance* in the interplay of differences and of traces. Given the centrality of trace, we have had to clarify its role in the respective writings of Derrida and of Ricoeur, explicating what in Derrida's view of the living present and time renders it unable to sustain trace, in contrast to Ricoeur's view of the living present and historical time that supports trace in its full sense. These contrasting roles of trace highlight, in spite of a positive commonness, the vast chasm that separates the views of Derrida and Ricoeur, stretching even to all-pervasive metaphysical differences that require a decision in favor of one at the expense of the other. Yet, bringing to clear light Ricoeur's critiques of Derrida's understanding of the living present and of phenomenology's view of inner time has, at once, revealed his agreement with Derrida on essential points of a view of trace in a sign system, and with Husserl regarding the phenomenological primordiality of the living present. In this regard, Ricoeur says that "Derrida is not mistaken in seeing in the trace, as early as the writing of *Speech and Phenomena*, 'a possibility which not only must inhabit the pure actuality of the now but must constitute it through the very movement of difference it introduces'.... And he goes on to add, 'Such a trace is... more "primordial" than what is phenomenologically primordial'" (*TN* 3: 283 n. 12),[34] a point with which he will disagree, holding rather that trace in his

[34] Ricoeur here quotes *SP*, 67.

own appropriation will counter a "phenomenology that confuses the living present with the point-like instant" (*TN* 3: 283 n. 12].

Thus, Ricoeur's alternative to Derrida's semeiological reductionism and the flux of time as discrete on which it is founded provides a viable alternative that does not succumb to the facile distinction of Saussure, nor to Derrida's collapse of signs to the relations of differences within the system and the reduction of language to the play of *différance*. Rather, Ricoeur is able adequately to account for duration and continuity in the living present as the basis for language as discourse and for trace. And Ricoeur's account of the temporal context for understanding language undercuts Derrida's pseudo alternatives of signs or presence, for the temporal span of the present is neither pure identity nor pure alterity. The present as thickened by retention and protentions "intends" the future in light of the past. Since the very function of the present is to mean and the very nature of presence requires signs, language and signs are inseparably intertwined with time. Thus, his theory of language as essentially discourse, his distinction between words and signs, and between signs and sentences, in the overall context of the unities of semiotics and of semantics, with the new unity of language in the semantics of the sentence, reestablishes some faith in philosophical analysis as having something worthwhile to say about something, even when it deals with an interpretation of language and of texts. While the positioning of signs, or the play of *différance*, can yield a productivity of some kind of meaning, it is not the replacement of the semantic dimension of language as primary. Syntax of any kind exists for the semantic. To invert this is to distort language, to make a mockery of meaning, to reduce meaning to an empty shell, as well as to render meaningless any attempt to communicate this message of inversion.

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Preserving the Eidetic Moment: Reflections on the Work of Paul Ricoeur

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Abstract
The paper argues that Paul Ricoeur's *The Philosophy of the Will* retained a certain fidelity to phenomenology's early emphasis on subjectivity. When Ricoeur turned to the philosophy of language, he found a way to retain a certain emphasis on subjectivity and individuality that would make his work distinctive among other approaches to the philosophy of language. Hence, the title, Preserving the Eidetic Moment, intends to characterize Ricoeur's distinctive contribution to philosophy. The paper goes on to show how Ricoeur's approach can contribute to Critical Theory, particularly in relationship to its theory of interlocution.

Keywords
phenomenology, hermeneutics, Critical Theory, subjectivity, Paul Ricoeur

I

My original encounter with the person and the work of Paul Ricoeur began with an attempt to appropriate his thought for the retrieval of the symbolic. This led to a concern with what I called "mythic-symbolic" language correlated with anthropological considerations about the nature of the human, subjectivity, the self—stemming from his *Philosophy of the Will.* At that time I had been meeting once a week with the Romanian phenomenologist of religion, Mircea Eliade, to discuss his work in general, which I wanted to write about. I told Eliade that I was not particularly interested in his classes; what I was really interested in was the philosophical meaning of his books. He took this seriously and for about a year we met to discuss what it was that his work was about. I realize now that Eliade was a Nietzschean and that his program in the phenomenology of religion had really followed Nietzsche's own desire to uncover the archaic dimension of history and experience, and use that knowledge to effect contemporary culture. Hence, Eliade's *Myth of the Eternal Return*

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had its real origins in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy.* Looking back, Eliade's concern for the recovery of the archaic shaped my encounter with Ricoeur, who had come to the University of Chicago to give some lectures. Before I actually met him, I had read the essay translated as "The Symbol Invites Thought" and was swept away by it. The essay seemed to do the philosophical work necessary to carry on my developing desire to retrieve the symbolic in the context of what I then considered to be an abomination, namely, the rage for demythologization that was rampant on the campus of the University of Chicago at the time. I should add parenthetically that I became, in a rebellion against my Danish Grundtvigian heritage, a rabid Kierkegaardian as an undergraduate. Ricoeur's idea of going beyond the pale of ordinary language to a kind of second, indirect discourse seemed like a good idea.

Before coming under the spell of Eliade I had considered myself to have been a Whiteheadian, until I realized that Whitehead's metaphysics was based on mathematics and to do it effectively I would have to become something of a mathematician, a task for which I was neither motivated nor equipped. These shifts from a kind of abstract rationalism to a committed existentialism can be expected of a student. Unfortunately, shifts like these have tended to characterize my entire intellectual life. In any case, this is how I came to be entranced by Ricoeur's *Philosophy of the Will*. Simultaneously, I discovered phenomenology, which I experienced as a liberation from the pragmatism I had been studying. Of course, I would come back to that too, in another form.

Ricoeur's methodological transition from eidetic to hermeneutic phenomenology fascinated me. The shift paved the way for a special orientation to the philosophy of language that would be distinctive among continental philosophers. Now we can see that Ricoeur was at the beginning of a long road that would take him from symbol and myth to metaphor and narrative, always with a passion for the nature of the self, the subject, personal identity—in phenomenological terms, subjectivity. When I first wrote on Ricoeur I did not see that. What I saw and wrote about was only shaped by Ricoeur's movement from the eidetic to the hermeneutic. (I was so fascinated by the hermeneutic approach that I went on to found the journal *Cultural Hermeneutics*. Ricoeur happily joined as an editorial board member.)

Ricoeur's particular redemption of myth and symbol allowed me to pursue what I would characterize now as a more or less Nietzschean project, namely, the retrieval of the archaic as a form of language. Hence, the final chapter of my book on Ricoeur is entitled: "Toward a Working Theory of Language Cor-

related with a Philosophical Anthropology."[1] My overall point was that a hermeneutics of symbol and myth could be conducted without recourse to reductionism. At that point I had only absorbed Nietzsche from working on Eliade's thought. I did not go on to make sense of the famous claim "for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*."[2] Instead, I argued Ricoeur's point that we can only get to a certain understanding of the human through an act of interpretation of a symbolic form. Ricoeur, I believe, had a slightly different agenda. After all, anyone who chooses the philosophy of the will as a topic and comes from a rigorous Protestant upbringing will possibly be preoccupied with the bondage of the will and its great Western tradition, from St. Paul to Augustine, through Calvin and Luther, to Kant. The problem of the freedom of the will was one, as he once told me, that he had been preoccupied with since childhood. The surd of the will, the involuntary, would not only find its expression in the bodily involuntary, but in the hermeneutics of evil—the self embroiled in its own inarticulate articulation, expressed in the symbols of stain, sin, and guilt. Here, in language, Ricoeur finds a kind of archaism, not the archaism of ritual as in Nietzsche, but in the archaism of singular expression. Hence, Ricoeur in his linguistic turn would construct a path that was unique among his fellow practitioners of the philosophy of language—at the heart of language he would find something like subjectivity—the triumph of singular expression, the language of avowal. This would mean that although he would make the move to language, he would always retain subjectivity as a theme, both consciously and unconsciously, and although it might be more appropriate to eidetic phenomenology, this theme would find expression throughout his linguistic and hermeneutic turn. Ricoeur's uniqueness was that he would always retain a kind of Husserlian preoccupation with subjectivity, immediacy, time, and temporality, even though he had made the move to language. Hence, the dilemma of the subject in the *Philosophy of the Will* as the dialectic between the voluntary and the involuntary, between freedom and nature, would find expression throughout his work, even to the end. "*Whose* memory is it?"[3]

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1) *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

2) Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Vintage Books. 1967), 52.

3) Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 3.

II

Shortly after my first grand encounter with the work of Paul Ricoeur, I turned, for better or worse, to political philosophy and a tradition with which I think Ricoeur was always somewhat uncomfortable, namely, the Hegelian tradition. Recently, I saw that discomfort again when I wrote the preface to the new edition of *History and Truth.* Quoting from my preface, "This book bears witness to Ricoeur's belief that the distinction between reflection and action is in some sense a false distinction because reflection is a way of acting. Hence the opposition between theory and praxis is, as he reminds us in the introduction, a false opposition. It follows that any reflection about the truth is about making the truth. For Ricoeur, philosophy was always an act of personal attestation."[4]

I go on to suggest that one finds here the trace of Ricoeur's ethical philosophy, which bore fruit in his later reflections regarding justice, politics, and even recognition (more about this later). However, what I mean when I point to Ricoeur's discomfort with the Hegelian tradition is that it was willing to collapse self and other. (When Kant speaks of *Würde*, dignity, he deliberately distinguishes it from the terminology of exchange in order to preserve its uniqueness. Hegel deliberately uses the language of exchange when he uses it in his doctrine of right.) Hence, in the move from autonomy (Kant) to intersubjectivity (Hegel), the uniqueness of the self is reduced to an identity with others, something Ricoeur would later call "sameness." One of the consequences, whether it be in the development of Critical Theory and its claim about intersubjectivity or in the philosophy of language and its discourse on representation, is that the uniqueness of self-identity is lost. In my view, Ricoeur addresses both traditions, perhaps inadvertently, in his monumental book, *Oneself As Another.*

As Ricoeur later told me, the argument with regard to the philosophy of language fell on deaf ears. No one in the analytic camp responded to it. However, in my view, it is a brilliant argument. In that book Ricoeur developed a strategy to reflect on the process of identification by attending to the basic analytic transitions from the kind of philosophy of language that bases itself on semantics to its pragmatic turn, while keeping in mind the relationship of the problem of identity to self-identity. Ricoeur develops a four-step argument

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[4] David Rasmussen, "Foreword" to Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth* (new edition) (Chicago: Northwestern, forthcoming 2007).

that I can only allude to here. The first part of the argument suggests that theories of reference and reflexivity under the rubric of semantics can conceive of identity only on the basis of a conception of self as *idem* or sameness. Pragmatics (speech-act theory) that attempts to move beyond semantics tries to get beyond the question of identity to self-identity through a theory of interlocution. Ricoeur argues that similar theories based on semantics (so-called pragmatic theories) are also limited by being able to consider identity only on the basis of sameness. Ricouer's project would be to work out a theory of interlocution based on what he calls *ipséité*, that is, the self-as-sameness related to the self-as-situated-in-time. The narrative theory of identity is thus able to overcome the dilemma of identity that has been present in the philosophy of language, with its preoccupation with the universality of signs, and even in its pragmatic form that is concerned with interlocution. At the same time, the narrative theory of identity is able to speak to the intersubjectivist tradition following from Hegel's critique of Kant's notion of autonomy. Ricoeur's theory sustains the uniqueness of subjectivity while at the same time affirming the continuity of identity through a conception of narrative identity. For me, the issue became central when both traditions, the Hegelian legacy on the one hand, and the philosophy of language on the other, are summed up in a form of Critical Theory that incorporates speech-act theory.

Having made the shift to political philosophy in general, and Critical Theory in particular, I would find in Ricoeur's reflections an aid to my personal development. What I realize now is that Ricoeur, who made the transition to the philosophy of language, would also find a way of preserving the eidetic moment within that transition. To put it more concretely, he would find a way of preserving subjectivity, or the subjective experience of the self, temporality, within language. That may be his peculiar legacy in philosophy. I have argued elsewhere[5] that through narrative identity Ricoeur has found, on the level of language, a way to preserve the distance between self and other that is reflected in the famous fifth meditation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. For those who practiced Critical Theory as I did, Husserl's fifth meditation presented a kind of dilemma where it was acknowledged that the phenomenological ego could not constitute the other in the same way that it constituted itself. Husserl, through the use of apperception, appresentation, and paring, attempted

[5] See "Rethinking Subjectivity: Narrative Identity and the Self," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 21, no. 5/6 (1995): 159–72. My essay reappeared in the book, *Ricoeur As Another: The Ethics of Subjectivity*, ed. Richard Cohen and James Marsh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 57–69.

to find ways through which the other could be constituted by analogy to the self. In the end his analysis posed an epistemological problem. Critics would point out that one could never know the other in the same way that one could know the self, and as such, the specter of solipsism seemed to haunt Husserl's philosophy. In retrospect, however, Husserl may have had a point. Perhaps there is a sense in which the other can never be known by the self in the same sense that the self can know itself. Ricoeur would take this view a step further finding duality and difference at the very heart of *self*-identity. Narrative identity could preserve the continuity of the subject with its own past while at the same time sustaining transformation and change. A narrative can link the past with the future by giving a sense of continuity to an ever-changing story of the self. Because narrative has this potential, it is uniquely qualified to express the ongoing dialectic of selfhood and sameness while at the same time trying to rethink the meaning of subjectivity.

We can now return to Kant's attempt to preserve the uniqueness of autonomy through his notion of respect and Hegel's critique of Kant through his theory of intersubjectivity. The critique is probably correct, but it is bought at a very high price. The price was identity philosophy. One might say that this problem occurs in a different way in the philosophy of language. The overcoming of the philosophy of the subject by the philosophy of language certainly amounts to a significant achievement, but in certain instances at least, it is achieved at the cost of the experience of the temporality of the subject. Ricoeur's critique of both the semantic theory of representation and the pragmatic theory of interlocution preserves the temporality of the subject within a philosophy of language. In this sense, the concept of narrative identity has been able to overcome the dilemma that was at the heart of a theory of interlocution. Ricoeur's critique of a theory of interlocution was not intended to merely undercut that theory however—the critique also has a positive outcome. If every speech-act commits the speaker, it does so in time. In this sense assertions are not mere empty identities; rather, they have a temporal context, which presumes sincerity. When we conceive of a promise or a commitment in time, clearly it will have the implication that one will be bound to it. Obligation in the present leads to obligation for or toward the future. The result, from the point of view of interpretation, is that narrative identity when written into a theory of interlocution becomes fraught with ethical obligation. How close we seem still to the *Philosophy of the Will*!

III

As the issue of global and cosmopolitan justice has come to the fore in recent years, I have had one more occasion to return to the work of Paul Ricoeur. Of course, along with Kant, I find cosmopolitanism almost infectious. Yet, there is a tendency for much of cosmopolitan discourse to be overly abstract, a bit ethnocentric, and reductive. Cautioned by my recent experience with the later Rawls and his somewhat less than enthusiastic rejection of cosmopolitanism in his *Law of Peoples*, yet instructed by the recent writings of Jürgen Habermas to see the development of justice from the point of view of developments within international law, I have found myself in a dilemma to which Ricoeur's thought has been something of an antidote. Two problems emerge: (1) diversity of cultures and nations requires sensitivity to difference on a global scale, and (2) given the necessity for universal human rights, it is imperative that everyone be treated equally. We might call this the "paradox of global justice." How is it possible to acknowledge the distinctiveness of other political cultures while at the same time granting legitimacy and validity to individual claims for rights? This dilemma is made more complex when, as we move beyond the confines of the nation state, the rights of individuals somehow transcend nationality.[6]

The concept of narrative identity developed in *Self As Another* preserves the nonidentical relation between self and self, and between self and other. One need say only that such a concept or model enables an encounter with non-Western or non-democratic cultures that allows for sufficient difference so that the identity of the other is not reduced to the identity of the self. The result would be the preservation of a certain asymmetry of interpretation. In Ricoeur's book, *The Just*, narrative identity has precisely this function. As such, narrative identity can play a constructive role that, instead of reducing other cultures to our own, enriches the overall significance of the story in which the cultures of the world play the part of the protagonists. However, that very narrative identity that can account for difference, given its temporal exposition as theory of interlocution, requires a certain respect for the other. And in the respect for the other, one acknowledges both the rule of sincerity and the capacity to fulfill it. In this sense, the universality of human rights are

[6] See my "Justice and Interpretation," in *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2003), 531–38; and my "Justice, Interpretation and the Cosmopolitan Idea," *Distincktion* 8 (2004): 37–45.

acknowledged. That means that the acknowledgment of diversity simultaneously involves the attribution of human rights.

To sum up, what I find distinctive and unique about Ricoeur is his way of sustaining that eidetic moment, subjectivity, through the various stages of his hermeneutic philosophy of language. In my judgment, no one else was able to do that with the freshness and the originality that he did. Of course, in the shadow of that stalwart defense of subjectivity and temporality lies the idea that never left him, *The Philosophy of the Will.*

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Action and Agents

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Abstract
Paul Ricoeur's account of the human capacity for taking action stands in opposition in important respects to two other prominent views. One of these alternatives is exemplified in the position that John Rawls holds. A second alternative appears in some interpretations of the results of neuroscientific research. My aim in this paper is first to highlight a number of the salient feature of Ricoeur's account. Then I will briefly point to some of the challenges it presents to these two alternatives.

Keywords
action, evidence, narrative, neuroscience, Rawls

Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology has its roots in his steadfast conviction that, whatever else is to be said, persons are fundamentally different from all other kinds of entities. This conviction eventually leads him to hold that the proper way to make sense of persons is to examine what they do and undergo.

Accordingly, Ricoeur has worked out a detailed account of actions and the agents who perform them. He concludes, in a way reminiscent of Heidegger's conception of Care in *Being and Time*, that human beings fundamentally inhabit their world by way of *action*. "There is no world without a self who finds itself in it and acts in it; there is no self without a world that it can act upon in some fashion."[1] In and through its actions we discover the self's constitutive capabilities. We discover, in Ricoeur's terms, "*l'homme capable*."[2] Corresponding to each of the self's capabilities is a distinctive vulnerability or susceptibility to the diminution or loss of the capability or to its abuse.

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 311; translation modified.

[2] See for example, Paul Ricoeur, "Le destinaire de la religion: L'homme capable," *Archivio di Filosofia* 64 (1996): 19–34, and his *Oneself as Another*, passim.

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In this paper, I want first to present a digest of Ricoeur's conceptions of action and agency. Then I will show some of the important implications his analysis has (a) for assessing the kind of individualism that shows up so regularly in liberal democratic political philosophy, and (b) for properly understanding the accomplishments of the sciences, particularly the sciences that study human beings.

For expository purposes, I distinguish several basic features of all action. They are: (1) There are multiple sorts of action, each of which sheds important light on human agency. (2) Every action is an event, but most events are not actions. (3) Action occurs when an agent both makes a choice and exercises initiative. (4) All action is, in some respect, interaction. (5) The evidence in favor of Ricoeur's conception of action and agency comes, not by way of empirical investigation, but rather by way of what he calls "attestation."

Consider first the multiplicity of kinds of action. Among these are the acts of searching one's memory and efforts to recognize, especially to recognize a person.[3] But for present purposes, I will focus on those actions that Ricoeur regards as most central, namely, the actions of saying or writing, doing or making, narrating, and imputing.[4] For the moment, let me simply mention two of Ricoeur's claims about saying and writing. On the one hand, for him, any discourse, any exercise or deployment of language, is an action. He says: "It is in terms of acts that we must speak of saying."[5] On the other hand, every action, whether linguistic or not, needs interpretation.[6]

A second feature of Ricoeur's analysis is his distinction between events that are actions and those that are not. All events are discrete spatiotemporal occurrences. All of them are effects or outcomes of some set of antecedent physical or psycho-physical processes. An event is an action, however, only if it is the doing of an agent who makes a choice and purposefully acts on it. In so doing the agent purposefully initiates an intervention into an already established

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3) See especially Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), and his *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

4) Though saying and writing are obviously different, they are both actions that consist of deploying language. Also, unlike Hannah Arendt, Ricoeur does not, in this context, draw a strong distinction between action and production. For Arendt's position, see her *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

5) *Oneself as Another*, 42.

6) Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Test: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," in his *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 156–62.

order of things and events. Thus, in accounts of events that are actions, an explanation through its physical causal antecedents is necessary but not sufficient. One also has to identify both the agent and his or her purpose for intervening. This agent is always a "capable self."[7]

It follows that, if there is genuine agency, genuine purposeful intervention that makes a change in the order of things, actions and their agents belong to two different orders of causality. Not only is there the physical or psychophysical causality that accounts for the sequence of events in and between both people and things. There must also be a goal-oriented intervention by which an agent exercises initiative and thereby purposefully brings about changes in the world.[8] Unlike the order of physical causality, the order of purposes or motivation requires a logical link between the action and its motivating intention. That is, "acting is always doing something so that something else happens in the world. [Furthermore] there is no action without the relation between knowing how to do something (being able to do something) and that which the latter brings about."[9]

Human desire displays this twofold causality. On the one hand, desire is a force that impels a person to perform some physical motion, e.g., "I chose the orange because I like it." But on the other hand, desire is also a reason for the action, e.g., "I chose the orange because it contains vitamin C." These two facets of desire show that the agent is both affected by the desire and takes initiative to achieve something, e.g., healthful vitamin C. He or she lives both in the order of nature, where desires press upon him or her as well as in the order of culture, the order in which actions make sense not only to the agent but also to others who learn of them.

Furthermore, agents always affect themselves by their actions. They undergo their own doings. Sometimes, of course, they intend to do so, as when they act to improve some talent or skill or their own health. But sometimes they suffer their action, perhaps unintentionally. Their acts can bring on fatigue, or addiction, or physical illness. In any event, this unavoidable self-affection shows that the agent, by virtue of his or her bodiliness, both belongs to the world as one of its entities but is nonetheless not wholly absorbed in the world.[10]

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7) On the connection between Maurice Merleau-Ponty's conception of the "I can" and Ricoeur's conception of the "capable man," see François Dosse, *Paul Ricoeur: Les sens d'une vie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), 128–35; hereafter cited as *PR*.

8) *Oneself as Another*, 109.

9) Paul Ricoeur, "Explanation and Understanding," in *From Text to Action*, 137.

10) *Oneself as Another*, 54–55.

Another feature of action is that all action is interaction. To be sure, only individual persons, not groups, are agents in the strict sense. There are no "higher order" agents.[11] Nonetheless, neither are there any actions that do not depend for their meaning on other actions that contextualize them. Obviously there are some elementary actions that all human beings can perform. We all nourish ourselves and give some expression to our sexuality. But even in these cases, these actions are not wholly independent of all other actions that we perform. Many actions are part of some practice, some established way of conducting oneself in some recurring situation. For example, shaking hands is part of the culturally established way of behaving courteously in some societies. So is wearing the attire appropriate to some type of occasion. At least part of the point of many actions is to participate in some practice. Practices, in turn, are related somehow to a life plan. A life plan, though always revisable, draws together a person's long-range ideals, aspirations, fears, etc., and some set of practices more or less appropriate to the plan. Thus any thoroughgoing understanding of an action requires a consideration of its relationship to the life plan and practices in question. These "practices are based on actions in which the agent takes into account, as a matter of principle, the actions of others."[12]

The fact that all action is interaction does not reduce the unavoidable risk ingredient in every exercise of initiative. Those people who are affected by an action often suffer from it. Actions all too often impinge upon other persons in such a way that they hinder or block, at least for a time, their own capacity for acting. In these cases, persons suffer not only physical or mental pain. Sometimes they also feel that their integrity has been violated.[13] Of course, many actions do not violate anyone's integrity. Often we want to be the recipients of what someone does. Nonetheless, "the opportunity for exercising violence lies within the very structure of human action—to act is to act upon another who undergoes my action."[14]

It would be obviously false, of course, to claim that most of our conduct is made up of full-blown actions. Indeed, much of what we do is a result of rou-

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11) Paul Ricoeur, "Practical Reason," in *From Text to Action*, 204.

12) *Oneself as Another*, 155.

13) Ibid., 190.

14) Paul Ricoeur, "Entretien," in *Éthique et responsibilité Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Jean-Christophe Aeschliemann (Neuchâtal: Baconnière, 1994), 16. Recall also Arendt's remarks on the transgressive character of action in *The Human Condition*, esp. 240–41.

tine or habit with little or no exercise of choice. But there are some performances that regularly we do regard as genuine actions. Among these performances are taking an oath in court, signing a contract, or making a promise. Probably most of even these performances are historically rather unimportant. Nonetheless, they do serve to reinforce the practices with which they are connected. The cumulative effect of such performances nontrivially affects the milieu for subsequent actions of this and many other sorts. Present day social or cultural historiography makes this point clear.

One conclusion from this discussion of action as interaction is of particular relevance for my present purposes. Because action is unavoidably interaction, we have to think carefully about the meaning of human autonomy. Because there are no "higher order" agents, there would be no initiative, and hence no action, were individual persons not capable of making choices and putting them into effect. In that sense, each person is indeed autonomous. But insofar as no person can act without drawing upon cultural meanings established by his or her predecessors or contemporaries, his or her action cannot avoid being dependent or "heteronomous" in some significant respect.[15]

But let me turn now to consider two sorts of saying, whether speaking or writing, that are especially pertinent to understanding action and agency, namely, the acts involved in narration, on the one hand, and in imputation, on the other. The "raw material" out of which a narrator fashions a story is a mix of actions and events that belong to some real or fictional world. The narrator selects from this world some set of events, doings, and sayings and arranges them in such a way that they display an ordered transformation from some selected temporal starting point to some end point. Within this time frame, the narrator portrays some real or fictional personages who inhabit some context and act or react to it in some purposeful way. Whether explicitly or otherwise, in the course of the story these actions or reactions show that "there is no ethically neutral narrative."[16]

In principle, every action is incorporable into some narrative that tells us something about some capable and vulnerable person. Indeed, each of us makes sense of himself or herself by constructing a narrative of our doings, undergoings, and the circumstances in which they took place. Inevitably, our

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15) See in this connection Paul Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology," in *From Text to Action*, 270–307, and Ricoeur, "Autonomie et vulnerabilité," in his *Le Juste 2* (Paris: Ésprit, 2001), 85–105.

16) *Oneself as Another*, 115.

stories will also include, at least by allusion, other people with whom we have interacted. In and through my particular story I construct my own narrative identity. My story ties my actions to those of other people and thus brings together multiple viewpoints on and assessments of both their deeds and mine. Thus, "the narrative constructs the identity of the character… in constructing [the identity] of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character."[17]

Narratives confirm that we cannot make sense either of our own lives or of those of others without considering what we and they try to accomplish. We cannot make sense of ourselves if we try to regard ourselves as nothing more than products of our natural and/or cultural context. The very fact that I can and do understand myself in terms of my story shows that I am at least the irreplaceable co-author of my life's meaning.[18]

The ability to impute actions to their agents is another basic constituent of human beings. To impute an action to someone is to do more than just to ascribe it to him or her. To ascribe an action or event is to specify the physical cause or causes that brought it about. An ascription answers questions such as, "What made the cat flee?" The neighbor's dog, the neighbor, some loud noise? But we only impute actions to someone. Ethical imputations answer questions such as, "Who, if anyone, deserves praise or blame for having made the cat flee?" If I did so for a good reason, I deserve praise. If I so inadvertently or out of invincible ignorance, I deserve neither praise nor blame. If I did so for a bad reason, I deserve blame. In all three cases, the cat flees because of something ascribable to me, but in only two cases is making the cat flee imputable to me.[19]

Closely related to the concept of imputation is that of responsibility. But whereas we impute only actions already performed, responsibility is related not only to a past action but also to its future consequences. Responsibility is related to the future inasmuch as I can rightly recognize that what I have done, deliberately or not, can give rise to obligations that I ought to discharge sometime in the future. For example, if I hurt you, even accidentally, so badly that

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17) Ibid., 147–48. See also Ricoeur, "The Self as *Ipse*," in *Freedom and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Johnson (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 103–19, and my *Paul Ricoeur: The Promise and Peril of Politics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), esp. 120–26.

18) *Oneself as Another*, 161–62.

19) To my knowledge, Ricoeur discusses in detail only ethical imputation. At least implicitly, though, he allows for other sorts of imputation, such as praising or finding fault with those who support some political policy or those who produce some work claiming artistic merit.

you can no longer work, I incur some obligation to help you and your dependents avoid being deprived of life's necessities.

Responsibility also refers to the past "inasmuch as it implies that we assume a past that affects us without its being our own work but that we take on as ours."[20] That is, to recognize that I am indebted to persons and institutions that have contributed to making me what and who I am is to recognize some durable responsibility for or toward them. Especially when taken together with the capacity to impute, the capacity to take responsibility makes clear that the way in which agents give meaning to what they and other agents do is irreducible to the process by which they ascribe effects to their physical causes.

It is, however, worth noting that there is some discourse that deliberately makes no reference, or nearly none, to its author or to its author's material or cultural situation. This is the kind of discourse used to report the results of mathematical or scientific research. We all know that these reports do come from someone situated somewhere. If we wish, we can try, as historians of mathematics, for example, do try, to find out who the reports' authors are. But no mathematical or scientific meaning hinges on our doing so. In that sense, the reports are anonymous. The contents reported belong to the "universal" world of mathematics or science, rather than to any particular situation. In other terms, the reports take place in third person discourse. There is, in principle, no room for first person discourse, the discourse that necessarily employs deictic expressions or indexicals such as 'I', 'you', 'here', 'now'. That imputation makes sense only in first person discourse, with its necessary reference to some situation. And narration is also impossible without some reference to a more or less specific situation. The importance of the distinction between first- and third-person discourse will become clear below.

To conclude this digest of Ricoeur's account of action and agency, let me draw attention to the kind of evidence he adduces to support his claim that to make sense of action we have to acknowledge two irreducible sorts of causality. The evidence for the physical causality involved in action comes from empirical observation and investigation. The evidence for the intentional or meaning-bestowing causality comes by way of what Ricoeur calls attestation.

Through attestation we recognize that the agent's power to act, to initiate, is a primitive datum. To take initiative, i.e., either to inaugurate or to work to

[20] *Oneself as Another*, 295. For a fuller discussion of responsibility see Ricoeur, "The Concept of Responsibility," in his *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 11–35.

preserve something inaugurated by another person, is to exercise freedom. But, as Kant argued, there is no way to demonstrate empirically that we are free. In fact, there is no empirical evidence as such even to unequivocally support the hypothesis of freedom.[21] Nonetheless, there is a phenomenological basis for holding that we do indeed have the capacity to initiate. We do so on the basis of "attestation."

The distinction between empirical verification and attestation is epistemological, not psychological.[22] Attestation is a kind of assurance or confidence that a person has that he or she can and does act purposefully and thereby brings about some new state of affairs. This assurance is not certitude. Nor can the confidence be empirically verified. It is "a belief, but it is a non-doxic belief, if one means by doxic belief that which is expressed by the locution 'I believe that…' I would prefer to speak of credence, as opposed to belief-opinion. The grammar of credence would here be expressed in terms of 'believing something' or 'believing in something or someone.' The witness believes what he or she says and one believes in the witness's sincerity. One believes in his or her word.… Assurance is linked with confidence in the sense in which someone's word is believable or not."[23]

This conception of attestation as a valid kind of evidence, fundamentally different from empirical evidence, is essential not only for Ricoeur's account of action and agency. If there is no such valid evidence, then Ricoeur's entire philosophical anthropology is undercut.

To see something of the wide-ranging implications of Ricoeur's analysis of action and agency, consider its relevance for assessing two prominent, though quite different, alternative lines of thought concerning human beings and their activity. John Rawls has figured largely in developing one of these positions. His liberal democratic theory of justice rests in no small part on his conception of the individual person for determining what basic justice consists in. The other line of thought I will discuss is one that is quite prevalent in interpretations of neuroscientific research. Jean-Pierre Changeux, professor of neurosciences at Collège de France, is a representative figure here. I focus on

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21) *Oneself as Another*, 109–12, and Paul Ricoeur "Morale, éthique, et politique," *Pouvoirs: Révue Française d'Études Constitutionelles et Politiques* (1993): 7.

22) *Oneself as Another*, passim, and Ricoeur, "L'attestation: Entre phenomenologie et ontologie," in *Paul Ricoeur: Les métamorphoses de la raison hermeneutique*, ed. Jean Greisch and Richard Kearney (Paris: Cerf, 1991), 328. For a good discussion of attestation, see Jean Greisch, "Testimony and Attestation," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 21, no. 5 (1995): 81–98.

23) "L'attestation: Entre phenomenologie et ontologie," 381–82.

Rawls and Changeux because Ricoeur himself has discussed their works extensively. Like Ricoeur, I do not claim that he conclusively refutes either of their positions. But the challenges he addresses to them are so substantial that they lose no small part of their plausibility.

Consider first Rawls's idea of a well-ordered political society. He develops this idea in order to formulate an ideal theory of justice that can guide actual, "nonideal" political thought and practice. The conception of justice he seeks "must specify the requisite structural principles and point to the overall direction of political action. In the absence of such an ideal form for background institutions, there is no rational basis for continually adjusting the social processes so as to preserve background justice, nor for eliminating existing injustices. This ideal theory, which defines a perfectly just basic structure, is a necessary complement to nonideal theory without which the desire for change lacks an aim."[24]

Rawls works out his ideal conception of justice in conjunction with two related ideas, namely, "the idea of citizens as free and equal persons, and the idea of a well-ordered society effectively regulated by a public political conception of justice."[25] His ideal society is conceived of as (a) being self-contained, having no relations with other societies, (b) having no immigrants or emigrants, and (c) existing in perpetuity. That is, this ideal society "produces and reproduces itself and its institutions and culture over generations and there is no time when it is expected to wind up its affairs."[26] Citizens of this society conceive of themselves and one another as equally free. Each has the power to form, revise, and rationally pursue a conception of the good. Each also has a capacity for a sense of justice that involves fair terms of cooperation in the pursuit of each one's rational advantage.[27]

Rawls admits that these notions of society and its citizens require a considerable abstraction from actual life. But the abstraction is justified "because it enables us to focus on certain main questions free from distracting details."[28] The same reason justifies using the device of the "original position" occupied by idealized representatives of actual citizens, whose task is to reach agreement on the fundamental principles of political justice.[29] These representatives,

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24) John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 285.
25) Ibid., 35.
26) Ibid., 18.
27) Ibid., 30–34.
28) Ibid., 12.
29) Ibid., 22–28.

Rawls says, will all agree that these ideal principles cover all the kinds of advantages and disadvantages a political society can distribute. They cover rights and duties as well as benefits and burdens.

Rawls claims that these representatives will agree on two fundamental principles, the first of which has priority over the second. The first is: "Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties, and only these liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value." The second principle is: "Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality; and second, they are to be to the benefit of the least advantaged members of society."[30]

Though he grants that his position is built upon fictions, Rawls take this to be unproblematic. He claims that these fictional devices allow him to discover some "constitutional essentials," i.e., some unequivocal provisions that must be part of any just democratic constitution. These essentials specify "liberty of conscience and freedom of association, and the political rights of freedom of speech, voting, and running for office."[31]

Though he appreciates Rawls' effort to rule out making anyone a scapegoat, a victim for the benefit of others, Ricoeur himself has rightly seen that his analysis of action and agents clashes with Rawls' position in several respects. At bottom, these clashes spring from the radical individualism ingredient in Rawls' contractualism and the admitted ahistoricality of his theory. Rawls banishes as far as possible from his theory the vestiges of the contingency of all human actions and relationships.

Elsewhere, I have discussed in some detail a number of criticisms that Ricoeur himself has addressed to Rawls' theory.[32] For present purposes let me focus on two parts of Ricoeur's account of action that adversely affect the plausibility of making the abstractions that Rawls' position depends upon. First, as I mentioned above, all action is in crucial ways interaction. Not only do I act in a context populated with other actors. I also act within a context of boons and burdens that predecessors have handed down to me and that I, in turn, will bequeath in some manner to successors. That is, I have responsibilities to others that I cannot avoid and ought not to abstract from in deciding

30) Ibid., 6.

31) Ibid., 228.

32) Bernard P. Dauenhauer, "Response to Rawls," in *Ricoeur as Another*, ed. Richard A. Cohen and James L. Marsh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 203–21.

how I should lead my life. Therefore, the fictional ahistoricality of the Rawlsian "original position" and the two basic principles that he derives through the use of this fiction do not satisfactorily reflect the actual conditions in which we make decisions and execute them.

Similarly, the "constitutional essentials" for which Rawls claims both permanent validity and a definitive, unambiguous meaning are themselves simply not to be found through any examination of the several democratic constitutions that are presently in force in the world.[33] A better formulation of the core of modern democratic thought and practice would have us "replace the notion of a regime governed by laws, of a legitimate power, by the notion of a regime founded upon *the legitimacy of a debate as to what is legitimate and what is illegitimate*, a debate which is necessarily without any guarantor and without any end."[34]

A second, and related, consideration that Ricoeur calls attention to is that Rawls' position is, as it stands, incomplete. Rawls gives no detailed attention either to the diversity of non-primary social goods that political societies distribute or to the diverse evaluations of the relative worth of these goods. Examples of these insufficiently discussed goods or burdens are laws and regulations dealing with education, with taxation and budgets, and with specific responsibilities and privileges given to state officials. But these are the kinds of "local," situation-bound issues that those concerned with justice have to deal with repeatedly. History, Ricoeur points out, gives us scant reason to think that we can find an ideal rule for ranking non-primary goods. Societies are compelled to rank them if they are to function at all. But whatever actual ranking is adopted is never immune to reasonable challenge. Every ranking is made by an exercise of political judgment that is affected by its historical context. Participants in the discussions leading to the judgment cannot draw a binding conclusion from formal rules alone. They must exercise a communal practical judgment that takes into account the specific contingent factors at play in the application of any general rule.[35]

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33) See my "A Good Word for a Modus Vivendi," in *The Very Idea of a Political Liberalism*, ed. Victoria Davion and Clark Wolf (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 204–20.

34) Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 39.

35) Paul Ricoeur, "Éthique et morale: Visée théologique (*sic*) et perspective déontologique," in *Ragione pratica, libertà, normatività*, ed. Marcello Sanchez Sodano (Rome: Università Lateranense, 1991), 353–66. 'Théologique' is surely a misprint for 'teleologique'. See also Ricoeur, "L'universel et l'historique," *Le Juste 2*, 267–85.

In my view, Ricoeur's criticisms give us reason to construe Rawls' theory, and any other "ideal" theory of political justice, as nothing more than a well-informed, imaginary alternative to the actual nonideal theories at play in politics. To call his theory a work of imagination is by no means to denigrate it. All attempts to improve ourselves or the political conditions in which we live depend on imagining an alternative to the conditions that presently obtain. But every imagined alternative will unavoidably bear the marks of the historical situation in which it arose. No alternative can be the definitive expression of what good politics should work for. As Ricoeur put it in a different, but related, context, "we cannot eliminate from a social ethics the element of risk. We wager on a certain set of values and then try to be consistent with them. . . . I do not see how we can say that our values are better than all others except that by risking our whole life on them we expect to achieve a better life, to see and understand things better than others."[36]

Ricoeur's account of action and agency not only provides a basis for concluding that Rawls' theory of political justice is inadequate. It also gives us reason to challenge Jean-Pierre Changeux's claims concerning (a) what makes us think, and (b) how we ought to interpret the results of any science whose subject matter is human beings.

Changeux is the author of a large number of works, among which is *The Physiology of Truth: Neurosciences and Human Knowledge*.[37] He and Ricoeur engaged in an extended dialogue about the philosophical implications of contemporary neuroscience. This dialogue has since been published with the title *What Makes Us Think?*[38]

Changeux's fundamental thesis is that the human brain's structure and functions are sufficient to account for all cognitive phenomena. Prior to and independently of any interaction with its environment the brain is spontaneously active.[39] In the course of its activity, the brain constantly produces what Changeux calls pre-representations, which it then projects, through the external senses, onto the external world. The pre-representations that the feedback from the world confirms are then stabilized and stored in the brain as

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36) Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 312.

37) Jean-Pierre Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth: Neurosciences and Human Knowledge*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

38) Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur, *What Makes Us Think?*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University press, 2000).

39) *What Makes Us Think?*, 112–13, and *The Physiology of Truth*, 25.

verified representations. All these pre-representations and representations are physical.

In the course of life, a person utilizes this expanding set of stabilized representations to construct knowledge both about the external world and about himself or herself. This process yields both propositional knowledge, or knowing-that, as well as practical knowledge, or knowing-how. Thus spontaneous brain activity is the initiating cause of both knowledge claims and the testing of their truth or falsity.[40]

The human brain is, of course, the outcome of an evolutionary process, but its activities are not merely the result of its genetic inheritance. It is also the product of processes of trial and error. Though he admits that the mechanisms by which the complex evolution of the brain has taken place remain poorly understood, Changeux holds that the supreme achievement of human intelligence is its search for truth, its ability to extract, store, and evaluate knowledge, to communicate it, and to discuss it with other people. Ultimately, this evolution culminates in a pattern of inquiry that aims at objectivity and universality. This is the kind of inquiry that combines the "efforts of a great many researchers who constitute what is rightly called the scientific community."[41]

Furthermore, scientific knowledge and the freedom of thought that it presupposes are constituents of a more comprehensive struggle for "equality and fraternity among human beings."[42] In the final analysis, all knowledge claims and all justifications of conduct are defensible just insofar as they are compatible with scientific knowledge.

For Changeux, genuine scientific knowledge is the result of a twofold process of detachment. On the one hand, it is detached from sensory perception. On the other hand, it is detached from the world of mythic thinking. Indeed, there is need for a scientific investigation of mythic thought so that we can understand how irrational beliefs arise and how the rational search for truth develops out of these beliefs.[43] In other words, scientific thought has to account both for its own occurrences and for the occurrence of the nonscientific thought it aims to supercede.[44]

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40) Ibid., 26 and 39–40.

41) Ibid., 252.

42) Ibid., 237.

43) Ibid., 234–35.

44) It is worth noting that this part of Changeux's position is at best paradoxical. A rhetorical question, attributed to Stephen Jay Gould, can rightfully ask: How can we escape the

Ricoeur does not question the empirical evidence that Changeux cites. He grants that the brain is *necessary* to account for any cognitive performance. But he denies that it is *sufficient* to do so. In particular, Ricoeur denies that Changeux can satisfactorily account for the multiple kinds of remembering and their relationships to forgetting exclusively through an examination of the brain and its memory traces.[45]

For my present purpose, though, namely, that of showing the strength of Ricoeur's account of action and agents, I will concentrate on his critique of Changeux's discussion of the relationship between scientific and extra-scientific knowledge. Even if the twofold detachment that Changeux describes is necessary for knowledge to be scientific, it does not follow that the only genuine knowledge is that which scientific practice yields. Properly to see the relationship between scientific knowledge and nonscientific knowledge, one should focus on the differences in the kinds of discourse that we use to articulate and communicate them.

Ricoeur recalls that, as Descartes says in the Sixth Meditation, there is a fundamental difference between my experience of my own body and my experience of the world and other people. I experience my own body, my lived body, as the zero-point of my orientation in time and place. By contrast, an objectified body as such, mine or anyone's, has no uniquely assignable time or place, no particular here and now. Unlike objectified bodies, one lived body cannot be simply substituted for another one. It is always a particular lived body that suffers some actual occurrence of hunger or disease or that enjoys some actual delight. The objectified body as such is just the site of possible experiences.

The differences between my lived body and that same body regarded as an object for study are reflected in the differences in the discourses in which I talk about them. The discourse that expresses the experiences of lived bodies cannot avoid reflecting that they are always located at some particular time and place and always live among some other persons. Discourse about them cannot eschew the use of indexicals or deictic expressions. By contrast, discourse about objectified bodies, scientific or otherwise, in principle has neither need nor place for indexicals. What is truly said of one of them in scientific discourse can truthfully be said of every objectified body of the same sort.

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recursive paradox that our brains, as biological devices constrained by their origin, must be enlisted to analyze that history itself?

45) *What Makes Us Think?*, and more importantly, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, esp. 414–40.

For Ricoeur, there is no evident way to reduce either of these kinds of discourse to the other or to subsume without remainder both of them into some third discourse. "Either I speak of neurons and so forth and I confine myself to a certain language, or else I talk about thoughts, actions, feelings and I tie them to my body, with which I am in a relation of possessing, of belonging."[46]

Ricoeur insists that the dualism in question here is a semantic dualism, not a substance dualism. He says: "To the body-as-object is semantically opposed the lived body, one's own body, my own body (whence I speak), you, your body (to whom I am speaking), his or her body (those about whom I recount the story). There is but one body that is mine, whereas all the body objects are before me."[47]

Given the fact of semantic dualism, Ricoeur refuses to give unequivocal priority to scientific knowledge. Indeed, scientific knowledge apparently has roots in lived experience from which it never entirely extricates itself.

Though he admits that the process of scientific objectification is not entirely clear, Ricoeur argues that one can rightly say that objectification requires a double detachment from lived experience. But one of these detachments is quite different from either of those that Changeux discusses. One detachment, as in Changeux's account, detaches the things or persons (scientists or otherwise) experienced from the person who experiences them. But Ricoeur's second detachment, unlike Changeux's, is not a detachment from "mythic" thought. It is the detachment of an object from the life world and the placing of it within a system of similarly detached objects. Consider two discourses about water. In the discourse of chemistry, all water (except heavy water) is simply H_2O and nothing else. Its relationships are exclusively with other chemicals, e.g., NaCl (salt), including the chemicals found in the human body. For me as a lived body, by contrast, water quenches my thirst, or is something I enjoy swimming in, or something to baptize people with, etc.

Likewise, it is always some specific person, some lived body, who makes or learns about a scientific object. That making or learning is always both ascribable and imputable to some particular person inhabiting his or her life world. In the life world the scientific thing made or learned, and even the process of

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[46] *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 420. Thomas Nagel gives a different but compatible account of the irreducibility of these two discourses in his *Equality and Partiality* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10–20.

[47] *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 419.

making or learning, is thrilling or puzzling or trivial for some lived body. Furthermore, there is a history of scientific achievements and those who achieve them that cannot be articulated within the discourse of the science itself.

Accordingly, Ricoeur concludes that, on the one hand, to gain a fuller understanding of ourselves or anything else, we have to detach the contents of our lived experience and subject them to one or more kinds of objective explanation. Among these explanations are scientific explanations. "And among the objects of science… there is the brain."[48] But, on the other hand, to understand ourselves we also have to reincorporate scientific practice and its results into our own lived experience.[49] Changeux's account of scientific knowledge precludes his recognition of the radical importance of our lived bodies and our life world. As a consequence, his claims for the unqualified supremacy of scientific knowledge fail. Like other human doings and their outcome, scientific work and its achievements have agents to whom they are imputable. We know by attestation that this capacity of ours for agency is not wholly explicable in third person language.

This brief, and necessarily partial, sketch of Ricoeur's criticisms of Rawls and Changeux lend force and credibility to his own construal of action and agency. He shows, of course without claiming that his own account is definitive, just how complex human existence is. In so doing, he gives us good reason to think that any theory about human beings and their doings that is reductive in any significant way or that neglects the historicality that pervades the human condition is unlikely to prove viable.

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48) *What Makes Us Think?*, 129.

49) One can see here vestiges of Ricoeur's earlier studies of the relationship between explanation and understanding. See, for example, his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

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Paul Ricoeur and the Nazis

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Abstract
Richard Wolin questions the connection between the philosophy and politics of Paul Ricoeur to make three charges: 1) Ricoeur's version of hermeneutics slides into a relativism of incommensurable perspectives; 2) Ricoeur's "covert agenda" in his recent work, *Memory, History, Forgetting* is to come to terms with the regrettable choices he made in his youth; 3) Ricoeur left us a written record of his pro-Vichy sympathies that raise questions about the political implications of hermeneutics. Each claim is, however, far from true. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is particularly sensitive to the charge of relativistic incommensurability and avoids it assiduously; his philosophical motivations in writing *Memory, History, Forgetting* are well known and are more important with respect to the work's merit than his personal motivations; and his early political writings need to be read in light of a broader, life-long attempt to find a balance between the universal and particular in hermeneutics, ethics, and politics.

Keywords
Ricoeur, Wolin, hermeneutics, National Socialism, Christian-Socialism

Paul Ricoeur was many things in his life: Christian pacifist, prisoner of war, acclaimed professor of philosophy, author of over five hundred articles and thirty books, recipient of honorary degrees from thirty universities, and winner of dozens of international awards and prizes, including the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy and the John W. Kluge Prize, sometimes known as the "Nobel Prize for humanists." Yet, according to Richard Wolin, Ricoeur deserves a far more dubious distinction. He should also be thought of as a former pro-Vichy, Nazi apologist whose hermeneutic philosophy is—not coincidentally—incapable of evaluating morally objectionable interpretations. Wolin's article, "Paul Ricoeur as Another: How a Great Philosopher Wrestled with His Younger Self," appeared in the October 14, 2005, edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.[1] In it he claims that Ricoeur's "covert agenda"

[1] Richard Wolin, "Paul Ricoeur as Another: How a Great Philosopher Wrestled with His Younger Self," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 14, 2005), Sec. B, pp. 10–11.

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in his recent work, *Memory, History, Forgetting*[2] is to come to terms with the regrettable choices he made in his youth. Wolin links Ricoeur's "youthful political transgressions" with "questions about the ethical adequacy of hermeneutics."[3] These charges about Ricoeur's philosophy and politics are not new.

In the late 1990s a controversy emerged in France surrounding Ricoeur's pre-war political writings following the publication of François Dosse's intellectual biography, *Paul Ricoeur: Les sens d'une vie*.[4] Dosse unearthed damning evidence of Ricoeur's politics from a little-known Protestant-socialist journal, *Terre Nouvelle*. In the March 1939 edition we find Ricoeur publicly expressing admiration for some of Hitler's speeches.

> I confess to feeling a genuine anguish in reading Hitler's speech: not that I believe his intentions are pure, but in a language of a beautiful firmness—I was going to write a beautiful purity—he reminds the democracies of their hypocritical identification of law with the system of their interests, their harsh treatment of a disarmed Germany. . . .

And further on:

> This reason seems . . . in favor of a politics of conciliation: I believe that the German ideas of dynamism, of the vital energy of peoples, have more sense than our empty and hypocritical idea of law.[5]

Such praise and willingness to make peace goes well beyond the typical silence and acquiescence shown by pacifists before the war even in the face the Nazi's stated political designs. Ricoeur's appreciation for the "dynamism" of German ideas is troubling since by 1939 the Nuremberg Laws were several years old and the National Socialists had already annexed the Rhineland, Austria, the Sudetenland, and were on their way to conquering Czechoslovakia. One French commentator wrote in 2000 of Ricoeur's *Terre Nouvelle* article that he "was in a stupor when he discovered these remarks."[6]

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2) Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

3) "Paul Ricoeur as Another," 11.

4) François Dosse, *Paul Ricoeur: Les sens d'une vie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994). Hereafter cited as *PR* followed by page.

5) Paul Ricoeur, "Ou va la France? Perte de vitesse," *Terre Nouvelle*, no. 43 (mars 1939). (Translation mine.)

6) David Hansel, "Pour mémoire: A propos du dernier livre de Paul Ricoeur," Octobre 2000, http://ghansel.free.fr/riccnew.html.

But there is more. In June 1941, after Ricoeur was captured and sent to a prisoner of war camp in Pomerania, he allegedly contributed to *L'Unité Française*, a mouthpiece for the collaborationist government of Henri Pétain. In a text entitled "Propaganda and Culture," Ricoeur argues that the state should "promote a virile education where values of character would be on equal footing with intellectual values, where enthusiasm will no longer be sacrificed to the corrosive spirit of criticism."[7] The text itself is, perhaps, less troublesome than the journal in which it appeared.

But was Paul Ricoeur really a Nazi sympathizer? Are these words of praise for Hitler's speeches youthful transgressions, or do they tell us something important about Ricoeur's philosophical-political convictions? I believe they do—but not what Wolin thinks they do. To understand more about the controversy we should examine these political writing from the late 1930s more carefully than the critics did. Then we'll be in a better position to answer Wolin's accusation that Ricoeur's hermeneutics is not appreciably different from Heidegger's or Gadamer's hermeneutics in its relation to political fascism.

Terre Nouvelle: Organe de l'Union internationale des communistes-spiritualistes

Terre Nouvelle was a Protestant-socialist monthly journal that was first published in Paris in May 1935 and last published in September 1939. The journal's logo depicted the familiar hammer and sickle superimposed upon a cross, planted into the Northern hemisphere of a globe. The contributors to *Terre Nouvelle* sought to combine a religious perspective with an anti-capitalist, pro-worker, and an anti-war political orientation. Although Catholic and Protestant socialism has roots stretching back to the mid-nineteenth-century, in France the movement gained momentum during the turbulent administration of Prime Minister Léon Blum's Popular Front government. Christian-socialists joined the chorus of critics of the Popular Front, which from the start was subject to virulent criticism from all directions. The far Right was critical of Blum's decision to shorten the work week and extend worker rights and his failure to contend with the rise of German fascism. The far Left staged demonstrations upon Blum's election and was critical of him for refusing to

[7] (Text attributed to) Paul Ricoeur, *L'Unité Française*, no. 1 (avril–juin 1941). Quoted in "Paul Ricoeur as Another," 11.

support Stalin as well as for France's decision to remain neutral during the Spanish Civil War. Predictably, the religious communities of both Catholics and Protestants became increasingly politicized and polarized during this time over the centrist Popular Front. Dozens of political-religious journals appeared at this time, the most famous of which was *Esprit*, which continues to be published today.[8] By the late 1930s, *Terre Nouvelle* was the premier journal of Protestant socialism, featuring articles by philosophers, theologians, activists, and members of the clergy. As Ricoeur wrote in 1937, summarizing the convictions of his religiously inspired, politically active cohorts, "We prefer the expression: 'Socialist *because* Christian."[9] Or as he elsewhere puts it, "Christianity for Socialism."[10]

The Manifesto of *Terre Nouvelle* states its political-religious orientation unequivocally.

> Because we are Christians:
> 1. We stand against the capitalist regime, enemy of the common good.
> 2. We fight against capitalism, the cause of war.
> 3. We want to free churches from the stranglehold of money.
> 4. We want to fight for peace and fraternity in justice.[11]

The politics of *Terre Nouvelle* were socialist, not communist; pacifist with respect to the war in Germany but not to the Spanish Civil War; committed to supporting revolutionary/progressive politics in both theory and practice; unmitigated in its critique of the depredations of free market capitalism on the economic, social, political, and religious spheres. A young Paul Ricoeur, only 22 when he first published in *Terre Nouvelle* in 1935, contributed nine articles to the journal between 1938 and 1939.

His politics at that time reflected the politics of the journal: a completely uncomplicated Marxism. The contributions of the young Ricoeur to *Terre Nouvelle* read as if they were written by a young Marx. He is uncompromising in his critique of capitalism as intrinsically alienating, exploitative, and imperialist; he maintains that political liberalism is an abstraction that merely formalizes bourgeois class relations and that real human emancipation can only

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8) For a history of French Christian-socialism, see *PR*, 41–67.

9) Paul Ricoeur, "Socialisme et Christianisme," *ÊTRE*, no. 4 (mars 1937): 4.

10) Paul Ricoeur, "Courte thèse d'un jeune philosophe: le christianisme par le socialisme," *Terre Nouvelle*, no. 15 (août 1936): 3.

11) *1938 Manifeste de "Terre Nouvelle," Terre Nouvelle* no. 30 (janvier 1938): 2. (Translation mine.)

be attained in a worker's state, not a liberal-capitalist state; he argues that the very liberal language of rights, liberties, and democracy is hollow and empty.[12] The only thing that complicates the Marxism of young Ricoeur (and distinguishes him from young Marx) is his religious faith, which gives rise to, supplements, and reflects his radical politics. Another thing that distinguishes Ricoeur's Christian-Marxism from the Marxist orthodoxy is his pacifism, which (arguably) sits uncomfortably alongside the revolutionary character of communism.

The *Terre Nouvelle* article by Ricoeur that caused a stir in France should be read in the context of 1930s Christian-socialism. Obviously his praise for the language of Hitler's speeches is worrisome, as is his criticism of democratic political institutions. But when read in context—in its entirety and not excerpted—even the praise for Hitler's language is not that alarming. In fact, it is quite tame. Ricoeur stands in a tradition that is critical of Enlightment political philosophy for being too abstract and empty to characterize adequately our political relations. It is a tradition with a pedigree. Ricoeur echoes the critique of liberalism found in Romanticism, Marxism, Existentialism, twentieth-century neo-Aristotelianism, contextualism, and feminism. He too valorizes conceptual alternatives to thin, contractualist social bonds, such as the community, the nation, and concrete relations with the other. These are the contexts that help us understand Ricoeur's 1939 article: 1930s French politics and Enlightenment anti-liberalism.

The controversial article is titled, "Où va la France? Perte de Vitesse" (Where Is France Going? A Loss of Speed). Ricoeur criticizes the direction of French politics and the sorry state of its liberal democratic political institutions.

> I am struck by the lack of seriousness with which those among us speak of the rightness of democracies and the demonic character of Fascism . . . . It is advisable to examine the moral character of the situation that one wants us to defend.[13]

The moral situation in Ricoeur's view is that European democracies are hypocritical oligarchies not worth defending.

> What is dramatic about the situation of democracies is that they defend *impure values*. At the same time as they try to save the indisputable values that Fascism has destroyed—

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12) See Paul Ricoeur, "Les travailleurs ne doivent défendre qu'une république des travailleurs," *Terre Nouvelle*, no. 33 (avril 1938): 7.

13) "Où va la France?", 2.

> a free society and the ensemble of public liberties—they try to safeguard the fruits of several centuries of piracy and exploitation of the world of the proletariat.[14]

Democracies are ultimately "plutodemocracies." Yet, Ricoeur notes that French citizens are called to defend an impoverished version of democracy, a unity of political rights mixed with economic exploitation. Rather than defend this version, France ought to attempt to disentangle the good from the bad in democracies. Presently, democracy and exploitation are inseparably linked and at the root of much of the world's problems.

> Take any current international problem. You will find a blending of freedom and finance.[15]

It troubles Ricoeur to see so many (within his circles) embrace the contradictions of democracies so lightly. "It's as if they had never been socialists."[16]

After he confesses his feelings of genuine anguish for admiring a speech by Hitler for its clear, firm language, Ricoeur agrees that the speech reminds democracies of their hypocracy and harsh terms of German disarmament and unfair limiting of German economic activity in ways that favored British and French expansionism. These arguments by Hitler, he claims, resemble those made by fellow Protestant-pacifist-socialists. He continues his mixed praise:

> I understand it well, that Hitler does not at all dream of organizing the world under the sign of collaboration—but at least he speaks about the dynamism of his people and not about eternal rights… and thus he wakes us from our bad conscience.[17]

Ricoeur's pre-war pacifism stems equally from his religious convictions and his doubts concerning the virtues of existing democracies.

> I am not a democrat with a quiet conscience. It is for that reason that I am not ready to risk everything for such a mixed cause. I do not believe that a just war can be ideological and defensive at the same time.[18]

Instead of war, Ricoeur says he continues to hope for a diplomatic resolution through another Socialist International.

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14) Ibid. Note the defense of liberal political values: it further complicates Ricoeur's otherwise uncomplicated Marxism, typically hostile to political liberalism.
15) Ibid.
16) Ibid.
17) Ibid.
18) Ibid., 3.

Ricoeur then turns his attention to the decadent state of democracy in France.

> What do we currently represent in the world? What do we defend? The Popular Front died and died well. No ideals took its place. This country is no longer capable of ideals. It does not even seem able to be fascistic. It takes effort and all that. The current regime of our Cabinet is a sign of a country that no longer believes in anything.[19]

The short (900 word) article concludes with a plea for a politics of conciliation with Germany without surrendering to German whims.

> We need more prudence rather than enthusiasm, more shrewdness than power. My wish is for my country to have good diplomats, skillful politicians . . . to lead honorable discussions and avoid renewing the capitulation of Munich.[20]

The capitulation refers to the 1938 Munich Agreement, where a conference between the leading Western European powers designed to address the fate of Czechoslovakia following the Nazi invasion of the Sudetenland resulted in the complete surrender of the state to Germany. Because Czechoslovakia was not invited to participate in the conference and Hitler soon reneged on the agreement, the Munich Agreement became synonymous with the "appeasement" of fascist dictators. That kind of agreement was clearly not what Ricoeur had in mind in his pre-war calls for peace.

Paroles de prisonniers

A second piece of damning evidence of Ricoeur's fascist-friendly sympathies is a set of writings that appeared in the 1941 edition of *L'Unité Française*, what are now referred to as *paroles de prisonniers* or "words of prisoners."[21] *L'Unité Française* was the leading propaganda journal of the French government under German occupation, headquartered in Vichy, France, led by Henri Pétain. *Pétainisme* in France came be a derogatory term for reactionary, even treasonous, politics—and for good reason. In spring 1940, after France was invaded by Germany, Pétain was appointed head of state and given extraordinary powers that he quickly took advantage of. Among other things, Pétain signed an

19) Ibid.
20) Ibid.
21) Paul Ricoeur, *L'Unité Française*, no. 1 (1941).

agreement ceding control of the entire north and west of France (including Paris) to the Nazis; he suspended the constitution and assumed complete legislative, executive, and judicial powers; he imprisoned political opponents, passed anti-Semitic laws, supplied Axis forces with material aid, and collaborated with the Germans to quell the French resistance; and he launched the "National Revolution" that sought to supplant the foundations of secular liberal democracy by recovering France's Roman Catholic heritage. *L'Unité Française* functioned to propagandize the cultural program of the National Revolution: it valorized French nationalism, it celebrated France's cultural heritage, and it attacked liberal democracy while supporting traditional, Catholic, personal and civic virtues.

L'Unité Française is a bizarre journal. The first edition is titled "Appels á Français: Le Maréchal Pétain" (Calls to Frenchmen: Marshall Pétain). It is a political polemic that celebrates the regime of Pétain, the strength of French culture, and the courage of Frenchman under the occupation. It is unabashedly nationalistic, Vichy propaganda. The second edition is titled, "Oeuvres de Henri IV: Lettres et Harangues." It is an attempt at (somewhat high-brow) humor, consisting of short entries pretending to be written from 1578 to 1610, playfully parodying Henri IV through letters and harangues from imagined correspondents. It is meant to be entertainment, not propaganda. The third edition is titled "Oeuvres de F. le Play: Principes de Paix Sociale—La Famille," (Works of F. le Play: Principles of Civil Tranquility—the Family) and returns to the political spirit of the first edition. It is a reactionary diatribe that putatively explains the causes of current social disorder ("false dogmas of 1789," "the Enlightenment myth of progress," "the myth of equality," and "the destruction of the family"). The author recommends a path to the reform of society by restoring the traditional values of family and religion.

On the surface, it seems unlikely that a socialist like Ricoeur would publish in such a reactionary journal. Yet there appears to be evidence that he did. *L'Unité Française* reprinted one of Ricoeur's pre-war articles, "Le Risque," (The Risk) from another Protestant-pacifist-socialist journal, *Être*.[22] "The Risk" supports a politics of conciliation and thus seemingly supports the collaborationist politics of Vichy. *L'Unité Française* also published a piece attributed to Ricoeur titled "Propaganda and Culture" and another article that was actually co-signed by Ricoeur and Louis Estrangin titled "La jeunesse et le sens du service social" (Youth and the Meaning of Social Service). It seems apparent that there was at least some kind of relationship between Ricoeur and the

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22) Paul Ricoeur, "Le Risque," *ÊTRE*, no. 2 (décembre 1936).

journal. And so, in 1994, Jean-Michel Ollé, from l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, sent a letter to Olivier Mongin, the Editor-in-Chief of *Esprit* (and author of numerous publications on Ricoeur), alerting him to Ricoeur's contributions to *L'Unité Française*, and asked why it had been deliberately omitted from his official bibliography.[23] The letter asked for an explanation as to the "nature of this lapse in memory."

Ricoeur privately responded to Ollé in a short piece titled "Note sur certaines 'Paroles de prisonniers'," available to the public at Fonds Paul Ricoeur, a research library directed by Olivier Abel at the Institut Protestant de Théologie in Paris.[24] Ricoeur states that he was unaware of anything published in Vichy under his name, and he declares unequivocally, "I did not publish it." He rejects the idea that he deliberately excluded anything from his bibliography, explaining that there were many writings from his youth during his "period of militant socialism" that he did not save, nor would he even know how to find today. Nothing was deliberately omitted. Furthermore, he argues that he cannot be held responsible for actions taken by others while he was in a P.O.W camp. He explains that the article he co-signed was indeed partly written by him, partly by others, but as a work it had obviously been radically altered and revised.

> It appears very suspect to me today; in addition to it seeming like it was manipulated, I am unable to disentangle my own contribution there.... it had to be suitable for the ideologues of Vichy, experts in amalgam.[25]

Dosse, the author of the most comprehensive biography of Ricoeur's life and work says, "manipulations in the transcription are quite apparent."[26] As for the 1936 article, "Le Risque" that was republished in *L'Unité Française*:

> This text was, pure and simple, taken from its original context which had nothing to do with Vichy. This text expresses a voluntarist and heroic ideology that Vichy could use but was not intended for it.[27]

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23) Ollé to Mongin, 1994, in *Paul Ricoeur: Bibliographie primaire et secondaire. 1935–2000*, compiled by F. D. Vansina (Leuven: Leuven University Press-Peeters, 2000).

24) Paul Ricoeur, "Note sur certaines 'Paroles de prisonniers'," October 17, 1994, letter sent by Ricoeur to Jean-Michel Ollé of the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent. Text available at Fonds Paul Ricoeur, Bibliothèque de la Faculté Libre de Théologie Protestante de Paris, Institut Protestant de Théologie.

25) Ibid., 1.

26) *PR*, 88.

27) "Note sur certaines 'Paroles de prisonniers'," 1.

Ricoeur's relationship to "Propaganda and Culture" is, perhaps, harder to defend—unless one actually reads it, and then it is immediately obvious that it was written by someone else. Neither the style nor the content even remotely resemble anything Ricoeur wrote before or after his imprisonment. The text is completely foreign to his political convictions. Dosse suggests, for example, that Ricoeur would never refer to France as "the eldest sister of the Church," nor would he advocate for a strong state "organized from the top, like a pyramid."[28] A quick survey of "Propaganda and Culture" reveals any number of claims that are very unlikely to have been written by Ricoeur:

> International capitalism and international socialism… are all the more disastrous, seemingly opposed to one another, they secretly support one another (22).
>
> A strong state is an indispensable organ of good government because to rightly carry out its mission a state must be free, and only free hands are strong enough for the good (50).
>
> Liberalism, capitalism, and collectivism in France are products of foreigners, imports that France naturally rejects (52).

There is no reason to believe that Ricoeur would ever (voluntarily) write such things. The better explanation is that others took advantage of his reputation as a pre-war pacifist who advocated peace with Germany to justify the unpopular Vichy government. Ricoeur and his imprisoned cohorts in Oflag IID in Gross Born in Germany had contact with the minister of education in Vichy through their *Université de l'Oflag* ("university of the prison camp"), which consisted of academic-styled courses taught by university professors and other intellectuals, including Mikel Dufrenne, Roger Ikor, and Paul-André Lesort.[29] They arranged to have college course-credit awarded back in France to students participating in the prison camp seminars. Perhaps that explains where the alleged relationship between Ricoeur and Vichy began.

Wolin and the Ricoeur Affair

Richard Wolin recently assessed Ricoeur's life and work to make three charges: 1) Ricoeur's version of hermeneutics slides into a relativism of incommensurable perspectives; 2) Ricoeur's "covert agenda" in his recent work, *Memory,*

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28) *PR*, 88–89.

29) For more on the "university," see, Charles E. Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and His Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 7–14.

History, Forgetting is to come to terms with the regrettable choices he made in his youth; and 3) Ricoeur left us a written record of his pro-Vichy sympathies that raise questions about the political implications of hermeneutics. Readers of Wolin are familiar with this kind of criticism. He has made very similar claims about the philosophy and politics of a number of twentieth-century European philosophers who have non-foundationalist, non-liberal convictions.

Wolin first made the connection between non-Modern philosophy and anti-Enlightenment politics in *The Politics of Being*, a reinterpretation of Heidegger's philosophy in light of his support of the National Socialists.[30] Wolin finds an internal relation between Heidegger's philosophical analysis of *Dasein* (human being) as fundamentally grounded in everyday life and history, and Heidegger's implicit rejection of political modernity as overly theoretical, individualistic, and detached from social practices. Wolin argues that non-Modern, non-liberal philosophy undermines our ability to find any critical vantage point and thus flirts with both philosophical relativism and cultural conservatism. He levels the same criticism against Heidegger's students (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse), Nietzsche, and French postmodernism.[31] Such attacks on the Enlightenment and political liberalism are now commonplace among both the conservative right and academic left. What is unusual about Wolin's criticism is that he directs it at Ricoeur. Whatever the merits of his critique of hermeneutics and postmodernism might be, Wolin is far off the mark if he believes that Ricoeur's philosophy and politics are anti-Enlightenment and relativistic.

On the first point against Ricoeur, Wolin claims that hermeneutics holds that all interpretative perspectives are equally valid. Hermeneutics offers us no guidance in deciding which actions or interpretations we should celebrate and which we should condemn; it offers no vantage point outside of any particular tradition that might help us identify objectionable elements within that tradition. Consequently, hermeneutics has had its "vociferous critics" because it is "avowedly biased toward the authority and prestige of 'tradition'."[32] The

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30) Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

31) See, Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); For Wolin's critique of postmodernism as anti-Enlightenment, see *The Seduction of Reason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

32) "Paul Ricoeur as Another," 11.

criticism is well known. In the late 1960s, Habermas raised precisely the same concern about Gadamer's version of hermeneutics, arguing that because hermeneutics eliminates the possibility of transcending one's tradition, it provides no means to criticize the ideological distortions and injustices that a tradition might bear. There must be, on his view, some perspective we can take that is transcendent to one's historic situation.[33]

Ricoeur raises very similar concerns about Gadamer's version of hermeneutics. He too is concerned that philosophical hermeneutics unnecessarily forces us to choose truth or method, contextual understanding or universalizable explanation. Ricoeur has always been careful to show how his version of hermeneutics is different from Gadamer's and thus not open to the charge of cultural conservativism and moral relativism. Like Habermas, Ricoeur seeks to identify non-hermeneutic forms of understanding (e.g., methodological explanation and universal pragmatics) that are potentially universalizable yet compatible with the historical character of hermeneutic understanding. He agrees with Habermas that a true consensus is achieved on argument and appeal to reason, as opposed to false consensus, which is achieved though coercion or appeal to tradition. What determines rational discourse for Habermas is a regulative ideal of unconstrained communication that forms the conditions for achieving mutual understanding, establishes trust and good will, and promotes social integration and cultural reproduction. Ricoeur agrees but describes these universal claims as "raised within the hermeneutic circle."[34]

Readers of Ricoeur (even good ones) often overlook the many similarities with Habermas. Yet there are several places in Ricoeur's work where he very explicitly incorporates a theory of communicative rationality into a hermeneutic philosophy in order to provide some version of a universalist vantage point that might aid in mediating conflicting interpretations. In the 1970s, for example, Ricoeur described textual interpretation as a movement from guess to validation and from explanation to comprehension.[35] In cases of

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33) For Habermas' critique of Gadamerian hermeneutics, see Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 143–75; Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," trans. Josef Bleicher, in Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge, 1980), 181–211. For Ricoeur's critique of philosophical hermeneutics, see Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991).

34) *From Text to Action*, 301–7.

35) Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

conflicting interpretations, we can always argue by offering relevant reasons in order to convince another of the superiority or preferability of one interpretation over another. Given the range of often conflicting and contradictory interpretations, Ricoeur echoes Habermas, claiming that "the question of criteria belongs to a certain kind of interpretation itself, that is to say, to a coming to an agreement between arguments. So it presupposes a certain model of rationality where universality, verification, and so on are compelling."[36]

In the 1980s in *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur argues that a regulative ideal of communication is operative within communication. A critique of tradition is mediated by a regulative ideal of unconstrained communication, which, in turn, remains historically situated in order to be applied in a particular context.

> The transcendence of the idea of truth, inasmuch as it is immediately a dialogical idea, has to be seen as already at work in the practice of communication. Taken as such, the pure transcendental quite legitimately assumes the negative status of a limit-idea as regards many of our determined expectations as well as our hypostatized traditions. However, at the risk of remaining alien to effective-history, this limit-idea has to become a regulative one, orienting the concrete dialectic between our horizon of expectation and our space of experience.[37]

On this Kantian formulation, critique is to narrative as form is to content: empty or blind without the other. Narrative and critique complete one another.

In the 1990s, Ricoeur appropriates communicative rationality even more explicitly in *Oneself as Another*, where he incorporates the ethics of communication from Habermas' reinterpretation of the deontological tradition.[38] Ricoeur accepts the basic principles of communicative ethics—that the very process of justifying normative claims presupposes that speakers have a shared understanding of what norms and reasons are and what they expect of us. Valid norms are discursively redeemable, impartial, universal, and rationally justifiable. His acceptance of communicative ethics is, however, qualified. Rather than contrast, as Habermas does, rational argumentation, on one hand, and convictions and social conventions, on the other, Ricoeur argues that argumentation is dialectically related to interpretation. He says, "what has to

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[36] Paul Ricoeur, "Interview with Charles Reagan," in *PR*, 104–5.

[37] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 226.

[38] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

be questioned is the antagonism between argumentation and convention, substituting for it a subtle dialectic between argumentation and conviction, which has no theoretical outcome but only the practical outcome of the arbitration of moral judgment in a situation."[39] Argumentation never stands above our convictions or conventions but, instead, is the "critical agency operating *at the heart* of convictions."[40] In Ricoeur's moral philosophy, conviction precedes and follows rational argumentation. How one applies the moral norm is a matter of practical wisdom and conscience.

Claims like these strain the credibility of Wolin's contention that Ricoeur's version of hermeneutics holds all interpretive perspectives to be of equal worth. While he rightfully worries that hermeneutic appeals to authority offer no help in deciding which traditions to venerate and which to reject, he should not be at all concerned that "Ricoeur's distaste for philosophic certitude" might risk "devolving into a feckless lack of conviction."[41] That criticism could well be directed at other philosophers, not Paul Ricoeur—a rather traditional thinker for whom philosophy and reason are synonymous. As he wrote in the late 1960s, "I do not in the least abandon the tradition of rationality that has animated philosophy since the Greeks."[42]

Wolin's second claim is that Ricoeur's interest in narrative theory in the 1980s and his recent interest in the interrelated problems of memory, history, forgetting, and forgiveness is motivated less by genuine philosophical reasons than by "something urgently personal."[43] Wolin wonders whether Ricoeur's "obsession with the past, and the difficult choices we face in deciding how to come to terms with it, represents a veiled autobiographical *cri de coeur*."[44] The clue to Ricoeur's "covert agenda" can be found in interviews he gave later in his life where he recounts his life and politics before, during, and after the war. He is quite forthcoming about the guilt he bears for his pacifism and partial support for Pétain.

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39) Ibid., 287.

40) Ibid., 288.

41) "Paul Ricoeur as Another," 10.

42) Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Willis Domingo et al., ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 296.

43) In 2000, David Hansel, not Wolin, first made the charge that Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* was written out of a desire to provide a philosophical justification that would allow one to "recreate" history. It was allegedly Ricoeur's hidden Vichy sentiments that he now wanted to reinterpret, remember differently, forget, and forgive. See, David Hansel, "Pour mémoire," 1.

44) "Paul Ricoeur as Another," 11.

> The early discovery… of the injustice resulting from the Treaty of Versailles had brutally recast the sense of my father's death at the Front in 1915; stripped of the reassuring halo of a just war and of a stainless victory, his death proved to have been a death for nothing. To the pacifism that stemmed from these ruminations was added in rapid succession a strong feeling of social injustice for which my Protestant education provided encouragement and justification.[45]

> Even though I have kept allegiances with socialism, and do not deny certain of its presuppositions, I think that political positions I took in those days were mistaken and even culpable.[46]

> In all honesty I have to say that, until 1941, I was attracted… to certain aspects of Pétainism.[47]

> It was a matter of putting France back on her feet, and we thought that this involved the Vichy conceptions as the government representatives presented them to us.… And yet I don't think any of us capitulated on the question of collaboration. The idea that guided us was more that of an inner renewal, along the lines of the youth movements, in a kind of continuity with what the Scouts had been before the war.[48]

> When I was a prisoner of war in 1940, I felt guilty for this defeat, thinking that my pacifism during the preceeding years, in large part, was responsible for the failure of France to sufficiently rearm itself in the face of German rearmament. As a consequence, we wasted a lot of energy fighting the so-called fascists in Paris while the real fascists were in Berlin.[49]

Wolin finds it plausible that these confessions of guilt and feelings of responsibility figure into Ricoeur's recent work, the subject of which concerns memory, revisting history, and making peace with the past. The content of the work ostensibly says something important about the psychology of the author.

Of course, the problem with imputing motives to an author is that they are ultimately unknowable. It is not clear if they are even relevant. Ricoeur's philosophical motivations, however, are well known. As he explains in the preface, *Memory, History, Forgetting* grows out from "several preoccupations," some private, some professional, and others public. The private preoccupation was to return to a "lacuna" in *Time and Narrative* and *Oneself as Another* that overlooked the role of memory and forgetting in temporal experience and narrative. The professional was to address the general problem of the relation

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45) Paul Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Carbondale, IL: Library of Living Philosophers, 1995), 8.

46) Paul Ricoeur, *Conviction and Critique*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press), 16.

47) Ibid.

48) Ibid., 17.

49) "Interview with Charles Reagan," in *PR*, 127.

between memory and history, and to answer the question, how do we represent the past? The public preoccupation was to address the "excesses" of memory and forgetting as seen in public commemorations, abuses of memory, official forgetting, and public policy over the just allotment of memory. Ricoeur examines the role of memory in relation to problems of knowledge, reliability, and collective remembering; how history is related to memory, explanation, and narrative; and how forgetting is related to memory and to the limits to our historical knowledge. Forgiveness is a particularly significant act of remembering events differently for the sake of justice and reconciliation. The scope of *Memory, History, Forgetting* is truly breathtaking. Ricoeur's personal motivations—regardless of what they might have been—pale in comparison to the philosophical achievement of the work.

Wolin's third and strongest claim is that Ricoeur's pre-war pacifism in the 1930s reflect not only a naïve view of European fascism but outright admiration for the National Socialists. Wolin grants that Ricoeur's youthful politics "in no way disqualify his considerable philosophical achievement," but they do raise questions about the ethical adequacy of hermeneutics, "the mesmerizing and seductive flow of interpretation."[50] Wolin writes,

> It is difficult to reconcile hermeneutics' uncritical reverence for cultural pluralism with a ringing endorsement of the moral point of view. In times of crisis, questions of principle must trump the inertia of 'forms of life' or tradition. Ricoeur's legacy would be even greater had he been less equivocal on that point.[51]

While it is true that Ricoeur is often reluctant to state his philosophical convictions with the force and clarity his readers might like, he cannot be accused of uncritical reverence for cultural pluralism. The criticism misses the mark. So does the criticism of Ricoeur's pre-war politics as pro-Vichy. That is an oversimplification.

Ricoeur has always been a moderate and balanced thinker. At this early stage, he is a faithful Marxist and a dialectical thinker, unifying seemingly opposed viewpoints. Later Ricoeur will revise his version of dialectical thinking in a way that contrasts (rather than reconciles) opposites and proposes tentative, imagined resolutions "as-if" they were actual.[52] He would call this

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50) "Paul Ricoeur as Another," 12.

51) Ibid.

52) For Ricoeur's unique method of mediation that respects differences, see Olivier Abel, "Ricoeur's Ethics of Method," *Philosophy Today* (Spring 1993): 23–30.

method a "non-synthetic mediation," or a "post-Hegelian Kantian philosophy."[53] In Ricoeur's earliest published writings, he contrasts Marxism with Christianity. Later he will contrast liberal or socialist universalism with various forms of cultural particularism. The Pétainist sentiments Wolin criticizes do indeed represent an aspect of Ricoeur's lifelong political sympathies: substantive, historical, social bonds are as vital in political life as abstract rights and rule of law. In the 1939 *Terre Nouvelle* article we find Ricoeur ruing France's inability to renew its own cultural core as successfully as the National Socialists had revived Germany's cultural core. But, as noted before, Ricoeur's critique of French democracy was a Marxist, not fascist, critique.

A better example of the balance Ricoeur sought between the universal and the particular is found in his 1947 article, "La crise de la Démocratie et de la Conscience chrétienne" (The Crisis of Democracy and the Christian Conscience).[54] Here he contrasts democratic political liberty with a socialist economy, both of which are haunted by the specter of totalitarianism. Democracy and socialism are vulnerable without the prophetic voice of Christianity that can help lead political institutions during times of crises. Or another, more secular version of balance between universal and particular is Ricoeur's 1961 article, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures." He argues that there are good and bad forms of the universal and the particular. The good form of universalism is political liberalism with its democratic political institutions and scientific and technological advances; the bad form of universalism is a dehumanizing homogenous global economic-political order based on a reductivist scientism and technocracy. The good form of nationalism is membership in community and transmission of tradition that promotes the creative renewal of the past and leads to genuine dialogue and exchange with other cultures; the bad form of nationalism is reactionary traditionalism that perpetuates injustices and prevents alternative interpretations of one's heritage.[55]

More recently Ricoeur has sought to mediate the claims of liberal universalists and communitarian contextualists. He agrees with communitarian philosophers that our political identities are formed in relation to our cultural heritage, shared experiences, and membership in communities. But the primacy of particular, historical ideals of the good life need not challenge the

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53) See, for example, Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 412–16.

54) Paul Ricoeur, "La crise de la Démocratie et de la Conscience chrétienne," *Le Christianisme social* 55, no. 4 (1947).

55) Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," in *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

liberal requirement of social justice that universal rights and liberties be protected. The right and the good in politics, as in ethics, stand in a dialectical relationship. Democracy is a fragile, imperfect attempt to balance social justice and our desire to live well together. The key to Ricoeur's recent political works is the idea of a "contextualized universal" that would lead us beyond the debate between liberals and communitarians. To assert a contradiction between abstract normative principles and concrete contexts of action is to misunderstand both the historic character of reason and the rational character of tradition.[56]

When Wolin writes that "it seems difficult to reconcile hermeneutics' uncritical reverence for cultural pluralism with a ringing endorsement of the 'moral point of view'," if he had only omitted the word "uncritical" he would have very nicely characterized Ricoeur's quietly ambitious goal to do just that: balance pluralism with universalism.

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[56] See, for example, Paul Ricoeur, *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 76–93.

ARTICLES

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Pharmacological Ethics

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Abstract
An engagement with Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy." The paper addresses: where wordless things exist (in connection with pharmacological ambiguity), Derrida's presentation of what he calls true morality (in connection with patricide, writing, and "straying with antisubstance"), the son's replacement of the father in writing, ("the god of writing becomes the god of medicine"), and "pharmacological *therapeia*." The paper ends with an account of "sensible awareness" and the ways in which the functions of cultural sensibility both confirm and show limits in Derrida's pharmacological practices. The paper throughout addresses issues basic to how people live in the context of a pharmacological disposition.

Keywords
Plato, *Pharmakon*, Derrida, writing, sensibility

"the graphic relations between the living and the dead"[1]

"Let us begin again"[2]

"…*Pharmakon*… antisubstance itself: that which resists any philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as non-identity, nonessence, nonsubstance; granting philosophy by that very fact the inexhaustible adversity of what funds it and the infinite absence of what founds it."[3]

"the *pharmakon* makes one stray"[4]

The above lines from Jacques Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" will provide the threads for the weave of this paper. You could say that I am about to engage ethically with Derrida's thought, although I doubt that would help us much

1) "Plato's Pharmacy," in Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 65. All subsequent page numbers refer to this essay.
2) Ibid.
3) Ibid., 70.
4) Ibid.

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until we have a good sense for "ethics." And even then I have my doubts because a good sense for ethics would be inadequate for the subject matter.

The subject matter is called pharmacological ethics, which refers to both Derrida's writing and to another matter—ethical sensibility—that I want to take up. In fact, I am soliciting Derrida's help as I work on the unstable matter of ethical sensibility and the funding it provides in our lives. But first, some thoughts on the limits of the lives of words.

Where Wordless Things Exist

Words do more than constitute their own world of signs. As they give dwelling places for meanings and images in their manner and style of arrangement, as they give rise to histories and reflections, and as they defer continuously the presence of a wordless signified, they carry people to a drop off where words stop. They show non-words. They can direct us to where they cannot go. They hand us over to things, to states of affairs, and physical events—even to their own wordless physical events. Their articulations move through the wordless mechanics of ears and brains as they travel by vibrations and chambers and neurological canals of ears. Or as they happen as flashes of modulated light and shadow. As we read, the lines and spaces of words pass through rods and cones, through mineral processes of absorption of light, and through electric transfers. Words rest as scratches and spaces, dormant in such artifacts as books, letters, slips of paper. They live as it were in storage environments that are without words, in buildings and rooms and bags and basements. They probably would not exist without people, and people probably would not exist without them. But in any case, words are not people and people are not words.

When we speak of wordless things we speak of much more than the differences of signs and the physical mechanics of coming to word. We speak and write too of sense. Take the word *pharmacy*, for example. It can mean, as you know, drugstore, the art of preparing and compounding and dispensing drugs. As you know too, it carries in its Greek lineage the sense of medicine and magic and suggests the administration of compounds that cure or poison. *Pharmakon* suggests sophistication, a trained skill that knows how to combine and measure according to recipes and prescriptions. Pharmacists have the advantage of life-enhancing and killing knowledge. They have power over ambiguity: pharmacists can measure out something that kills people, but measure it to the point where it heals them by killing something else in them.

Most of the *pharmakon*'s activity and work environment is without words. The words of the recipe leave off at the powders and liquids, the pestles and mortars. Words stop before the bottles and pills. They quit as the hand brings the pill to the mouth, as the water leaves the glass, the little capsule slides down the throat, dissolves in the stomach. Words are not at work as elements of the compound absorb into cells and organs and bring a quieting or a quickening or total silence. The word *pharmakon* itself brings us quickly to the limits of its ambiguous senses, brings us to a different event from the wordlessness of its differential ambiguity. It brings us to its own differential happening and to the wordless things that constitute the measure of pharmacological skill and of its meaning.

A worded site with which you can live can be filled with pleasure and wonder—the poem, the drama, the story, the whispered words. Or it can give a place of anger and pain. Systems of signs and sense have enormous power, and Derrida has shown like no other that a measure of the power of words is found in nothing to be signed, in *differance*, in the *loss* of presence and meaning that make words play with what they never possessed and lose nonetheless. Rules, laws, meaning, authority, cohesion, order—they all pass as they play their roles in texts; they pass as they play their roles graphically, we might say. They pass with traces of mere differencing, often as regeneration and with nothing to hold to but signs that echo spaces without signs. Such is the wordless life of words in our written systems of meaning and belief. Worded sites where we find ourselves sensibly alive are lively, that is, they are forever coming to pass—dying sites of passing lives.

Where words leave off something else than words happen. Although there has been some confusion along the way, most metaphysicians in the West have known that. Words certainly did not form the *happening* of *dianoia* or *to agathon* or *phusis*. They were not the stuff of good actions or material things. The word of God was usually known as a revelatory event that eternally transcended words. Signs might have parasitical relations to divine occurrences and siphon off a measure of glory. But those privileged signs were also left in ashes by the word of God, that is, by the unwordable *events* of divinity, events that *presence* does not fully describe, any more than *presence* fully describes the occurrences of lightening, hurricanes, and suffering. What happens in events like these usually leaves words alone.

You have noticed that I am giving special consideration to the lives of systems of signs, to the vitality and force of their occurrences, to their mortal capacity for growth, to the coming to pass aspect of their differentiations. I am not so much addressing "the graphic relations between the living and the

dead," as Derrida described himself as doing (65), as I am addressing the living happening of those relations. Before I finish I want to describe a sensibility that I will call pharmacological, one that accounts those living happenings. Its description will constitute a straying with Derrida toward the non-textual force of sensibilities that can unsettle texts and philosophies—with hardly a sign.

"It is truly *morality* that is at stake"[5]

The issue of Derrida's essay is one of morality in part because morality is said to have come not from writing but from a source outside of texts. It is a non-pharmacological source, a straight, authoritative source who is mythologically, i.e., textually, described as an illiterate, law-giving, father-like god-king. Note that the moral issue is raised by Derrida-reading-Plato's *Phaedrus* in the context of a lot of foolishness. The issue of moral propriety arises with a myth in this reading. Myth is more than suspect in the dialogue: Myths do not speak the truth, and it is in the myth of Theuth that the moral law-giver, the father-like god-king appears. Socrates adds to this foolishness by merely repeating what he does not and cannot know to be true—the hearsay evidence of a conglomerate of stories—this myth of a long ago Egyptian god. And in this messy context the issue of what is good and bad arises. What makes the context so messy is that the very powerful authority over good and bad rests with a hodgepodge of texts of stories that find their authoritative basis in themselves, i.e., in a signifier of a signified that is said to be outside themselves. There is no sight of a transcendent other, no process of beginning again and again, no critical examination: In this mythological text there is no soul cleansed enough to know itself or to see the questionableness of its images. There are no distinctions that clarify limits in contrast to confused, muddled assertions. The way of the myth of Theuth does not really know the difference between good and bad or between authority by mere force and authority by wisdom. Clearly, the way we *should* be, the proper home for the soul—the good ethos for people—is what is at stake. And Derrida is suggesting through his presentation of Socrates that writing, the most pharmacological of sites, might well be the most propitious location for morality to grow. In fact, it might be the only location where morality can be found.

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[5] p. 74.

At this point Derrida injects a "fact" into the discussion (76). It is a fact that "Platonism" sets up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality. "Everyone knows this" (76). So we have a compounded moral issue: "the *permanence* of the Platonic scheme" (emphasis added) that sets a major Western course for moral consideration, this very bad lineage of posited permanence is given factual status by a hearsay that is itself dominated by a paternalistic speech that is not supposed to be pharmacological. I would like now only to note that this is not a good thing and that it is said to provide an origin for what "we" know to be good. The powerful and traditional take on Plato appears to be lost to its own writing without knowing it, and hence lost to the very place of Socratic inquiry, i.e., lost to the texts of Plato. Derrida almost seems to suggest that Platonism in this context is as bad as the lineage of Theuth to which it seems to belong insofar as it is written. The unspeakable *pharmakon* of writing is looking better all the time for reasons we are not sure about in this section other than the negative reason that it is not authored by any Father-like God-King who owes his authority to something like gossip and its consequent toxicity.

Derrida is showing not only that hearsay evidence is bad. He is also showing that, in the dialogical presentation, writing originates by something like a son who has whatever authority he enjoys due to his father's presence. Without talking God-Father, son-writing is in serious trouble. Only his father, talking with glorious and present authority, can save the boy, who is said to derive his *flawed*—we could almost say his *incarnate*—writing ability from his Father's nontextual and inexhaustible supply of words and meaning. "Misery" is the word Derrida uses to describe the son's dependent state (77).

Misery aside for the moment, Derrida is having a whopping good time with the text right now, as he writes about the son who has a patricidal sense for his illiterate, dominating, hyperactive, self-protective and glorious father-god in the context of a myth that neither Plato nor Socrates believe to be true, according to the best legends that Derrida can find. I note the elements of fun and play to give prominence to an aspect of Derrida's "straying" with "antisubstance itself." It is an important dimension in the way this text gives housing, if not exactly a home, for readers' feelings and reflections, for readers' senses of place and time as they become familiar with this text. The way of Derrida's text and its decency (regarding the sense of *pharmakon*) and its indecency (in the face of the Father's authority)—its way is marked by both straying and playing. I am not sure that people with a strong predisposition toward reverence and the seriousness particular to it can want to live pharmacologically or even try out that way of living, as it were, seriously. We will return to this aspect of

sensibility by which people encounter texts. For now we see Derrida's playfulness in a misery-producing context, his refusal of the mood of reverence, his trickster-like leadership of the text of *Theuth* and the text of Socrates to a melding point. And all of this in the knowledge that lives of people are at stake.

The issue thus continues to be one of morality: the toxic effects of 'the father's rule' and the son's written, but unacknowledged, rebellion. Mythically speaking we can speak and see the truth only by the good offices of the imperceptible and shining glory of the Father-God who sheds his light by the representational means of a gifted progeny. In translation that means, for one thing, that writing can be true only it if is guided by the unwritten logos, the speech of the father, and we know this is so by means of inspired accounts that confess themselves to have their origin in unwritten communications. Derrida is carrying out his end of the moral effort by writing the communicated logoi in such a way as to submit emphatically the flow of words to the *differance* of written signs and thereby giving the unveiling of logos to an unspeakable process. He owns the losses in writing and the death of unfounded paternal authority. The hyperactive father dissipates in the non-reverential element of writing. The son loses his glory-source. And, unspoken, writing's *pharmakon* cooks up and administers in the process its poisons and life-giving medicines. A way of life, both good and bad, unfolds in the unspoken dissolution of logocentric morality. This morality happens in Derrida's graphic replay of suns and sons, of written *re*-sources and textual habits (repetitions). Dangerous gods and extra-textual fathers fall prey to the pharmacist as the healing poison takes effect.

The Son Supplements and Replaces the Father

The secondary, supplemental aspect of the son is itself supplemented by replacement. According to Derrida's account, the son, Thoth, the Hermes and Cadmus of early Egypt, a messenger God and the God of writing, never initiates words or identity (84ff.). He repeats them or re-presents them in writing. (I note that Derrida is carrying out a genealogical emphasis here as he shows a mythological lineage of the dominance of speech over writing and of monotheistic morality.) By inscribing the messages he receives, Thoth the son gives the too brightly shining and blinding words of the great Father-God a place of access. Thoth cannot contribute truth, originality, or authority. But he can give by writing "metonomic substitution, historical displacement, and violent subversion" (89). Equally important for the formation of Western morality

and its requisite freedom, by giving Father-God a place of representation the son effects the *loss* of glorious father-identity: Thoth's substitution is killing. He may be cut off by the father, but the son inscribes the cut with his stylus; and whether we interpret it as an act of resentment or revenge or incarnate, and thus mortal, obedience, Thoth's actions as the writer-God let the Father remain obscure and only indirectly effective in his glory. Daddy Ra must go through son Thoth's off-putting scratching and scribbling to be remembered, feared, honored, and obeyed. He is revealed in his suffered loss. Who would have thought that the meaning of divine incarnation and suffering would go back to mythological Egypt and to the unreliable stories that inscribe Ra's loss in Thoth's supplement?

You can see that Derrida is showing that a significant dimension of traditional Western ways of life, of our mores, has its beginnings in the tensions of an overwhelming, voiced authority and a literate and derivative as well as obedient and mortally disobedient son-servant.

Thoth: God of beginning again, of resurrection in the sense of the play of death-life-death-life; of stealth, deception, infinite replacement, of divination, of differential violence; unstable ambivalence; misrepresentation; representation: Thoth, the God of writing, of scripture, of the Father's word, of remembrance, like a floating signifier whose seeming erasure means God's story—this God who gives and takes away a transcendental signifier is the condition for the possibility of the Platonic tradition, the law of Moses, the word of God made flesh, and also, by the way, of philosophy. Derrida's irreverent writing is as close to worship as he will get, and here we are in the middle of it, making sense of it, repeating and glossing it, looking, very likely, for truth and inclined all along to revere Plato (is he the son?) and love Socrates (father Socrates?), two of Thoth's (as the God of writing) rather more deceptive inscriptions. Derrida knows they are deceptive inscriptions because in fact they come to us by way of writing, and writing is Thoth's thing. For so it is written.

"The god of writing is thus also a god of medicine."[6]

The disappearing god of writing can make you well. As well as poison you. Wellness and sickness are pharmacological issues, and we may know that in this writing of Derrida we are facing issues of health and sickness, life and death as we face "a dynamics that constantly surprises the one who tries to manipulate it as master and as subject" (97). The chance of healing and the

[6] p. 94.

danger of poisoning lie, apparently, in projects of unsurprising mastery, in efforts toward controlled predictability (a mastery of grammar, for example), in proper measuring (development of a style appropriate to a language, for example). Derrida appears to suggest that such measuring is found in writing but that the measure of writing can be taken only in another unmeasured writing. Hence, the value of healthy surprise as distinct from unhealthy predictability when a writing does what no one authorized it to do. And yet measuring steadily and regularly yields the discipline to read well, leads the way to recognizing laws and logics, to a healthy respect for limits, requirements, mistakes. Without a proper measure we will not know the difference between stories of Ammon Ra and Thoth, on the one hand, and of Plato's *pharmakon*, on the other. We will not know how to write well. Nor will we know when writing well becomes a mortal sickness.

The loss and reinstatement of moral authority runs through this work so forcefully that in its ethos one must begin again and again as mastering good sense breaks up in the "infinite absence that founds it" (70). And yet I am highlighting in this process a persistent—an almost traditional—preoccupation with sickness and health, a distinct and recognizable preconception of the violence and fundamental error of tyranny, of traditional images of paternal authority, and the equally forceful images of the obedient and departing child. The imagery of male dominance dominates as such dominance is repeatedly solicited and reinstated—it is not the "child"; it is the "son." This is not simply a rebellious text. It's a writing with rebellion in it, belonging to it. But the author, Derrida, who named his essay, is not a particularly rebellious subject. There is an almost son-like adherence to texts, an adherence that, smiling, asks, boy-wise as it were, the father-text if he has considered things in light of recent knowledge, things such as new medicines for his headaches, new and transformative historical and linguistic studies, new technologies, new ways of assessing and recognizing things. Of course Derrida does not ask these kinds of questions directly, but he does bring a new reading through the bad inheritors to a surprising, apparently originary text, and through that text he goes to an Egyptian myth that might have more to do with the text as he finds it than Platonism ever dreamed. And Derrida the writer—son of Platonism and Plato and Socrates and Thoth (where is the mother?)—this reasonably faithful son of men dreams, as he seems to me, of a health that he can know only in spasms of surprise as writing has its patricidal way. The good son, repeatedly surprised by his paternity and its loss. The naughty son who fraternizes with unauthorized writing. The son of writing, the lost boy without clear paternity, re-writing lineages that the ethos of writing twists like an unstable tangle of coiled

steal lines that, too tightly wound, suddenly snaps and realigns. To the faithful, naughty son's delight.

The rising health of the text is found in the downfall of the father's voice. It is found in the lively pharmacological process, not in a prescription. I suppose that good health often is shown by no need for a prescription. But now we are finding that the pharmacological process itself, in all of its errancy, is just what the pharmacist and the ethicist ordered, or would have ordered had they lasted long enough to place an order.

"This blockage of the passage among opposing values"[7]

This phrase occurs as Derrida defines "anagrammatical writing." "When," he says, "a word inscribes itself as the citation of another sense of the same word." When a translator chooses only one of these renditions, the first effect is neutralization of the citational play in the anagram, and, in the end, quite simply the neutralization of the very textuality of the translated text (98). Writing is anagrammatical as it inscribes the multiple, often opposing, senses or values of words. Derrida has in mind the opposed senses of *pharmakon* in the lines I am referring to. You can think of many other examples, such as the word, 'fit': suitable, proper, appropriate, particularly adaptable; a sudden and violent attack of a disease, an emotional reaction (so the phrase, a normal fit, has wonderful, anagramatical play and possibilities). Or 'sacred', that, in its lifetime, has meant both holy and accursed. So many words have multiple and opposing identities!

Recognition of multiple and often opposing forces in identities has had a remarkable effect not only in the lineage of the doctrine of original sin but also in the recent lineage of continental thought. I am thinking, in addition to Schelling, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, of Freud and Jung, Heidegger, Deleuze, Foucault, and many others, in addition to Derrida. Continental thought is formed in part around the recognitions that unity of purpose, essential harmony, or even pervasive likeness is not definitive of any identifiable and represented way of living. To be identified is to be many, not one. To normalize an identity into one fit is to neutralize its play and possibilities.

The image of a single, authoritative identity has also lost a significant measure of force—doubtlessly a pharmacological event with major ethical

[7] p. 98.

consequences. In the writing at hand and in accord with . . . let us call it, anagrammatic recognition, Derrida valorizes displacement and multiplication of elements of identities. He valorizes what he calls the proliferation of lack, which, as identification takes place, means a multiplication of written signifiers, the work of antisubstance in writing, the inexhaustible conflicts in what funds signification, and the logos of chance, death, and beginning again. And in all of this—not simply all of this straying from Platonism, but this redirecting and replacing Platonism—this text shows a measure of sympathy with Platonism's, as well as with Plato's, preoccupation with ways people live, with our *ethea*, and with our language and texts that bring us not only sickness and health but also suffering, unredeemable destruction, and the exhilaration of new life. Those are, I believe, along with their groundless supplement and unfunded dynamics, definitive aspects that we find in "Plato's Pharmacy."

Derrida's pharmacological writing, in addition to giving an account of its lineage and processes, composes a mixture of describable predispositions. When I am thoroughly engaged in it, I feel differently from the way I feel when I am very much into the language and conceptuality of *The Critique of Pure Reason* or *The Phaedrus*. I am inclined positively toward the silent differencing and deferring that go on. When I read Derrida, my sense for freedom is different from that sense when I read Kant or Plato. I go with the relentless decapitation of transcendentally signified figures who mean to live outside of differential and mortal time. Texts have a primary draw on me, and I feel suspicion toward thought that is not based in texts. The supplement of writing moves me to astonishment. Beginning again strikes me as inevitable for understanding and thought. I perceive play as a kind of discernment. I am drawn toward the language of psychoanalysis. And much more. My general observation is that Derrida's writing constitutes not only an ethos—a way of living—but at the same time a region of awareness that effects and affects my sense of things. His writing constitutes a sense of things that is forceful and shareable. It makes a sensible difference. There is a remarkable immediacy in his text, a pharmacological immediacy, an ethical immediacy that *is* shifting, coiling, and recoiling, highly affectional, continuously deferring and destabilizing: his writings compose a sensibility.

Straying

I strayed from Derrida's text as I emphasized the ethos and immediacy of his text, the way it lives pharmacologically. In that emphasis I wanted to show a

manner of life that moves by conflict and *differance*, moves without a guiding Spirit or subject. It is a manner of writing that refers to itself by its attention to its unauthorized, pharmacological deviations as well as by attention to its anagrammatical aspects of unmasterable unpredictability—pharmacological *therapeia*, I suppose we might call it. I turn now to the issue of sensibility, sensibility that is not less conflicted than writing, but is not quite written. Sensibility indicates one of those drop-off places where wordless things exist and where things other than texts are sometimes most prominent.

There is an immediate dimension—and in a moment I will say a highly conflicted, anagrammatical dimension—in the operation of sensibility. We are able to sense things, to recognize them as contextualized and as specific things, for example, by virtue of… in our straying moment let us call it a fund, although I will have to delimit that word carefully. We are able to recognize things as contextualized and specific by virtue of an operating fund of affectively charged standards, values, categories, limitations, and so forth. Sensibility functions as a tacit awareness, like the awareness that occurs in the ethos of Derrida's writing. It enables us to see images with felt meaning and to hear sounds with recognition. A sensibility functions in all discernments, judgments, persuasions—in all of our rationalities and delimiting awareness.

This sensible ability is very much in the world in the sense that, when we come into an environment from another environment, that new, living region conveys us into an appreciable difference of feel and perceptiveness. A mood not fully our own comes as we leave the city and go into a flat and unpopulated plain or as we leave the plain and come into a thick forest. Or when we leave the street and enter a building without windows. Or when we enter a cathedral or, as it were, a text of Derrida or Nietzsche or Fichte. A very different sensibility pervades poems by Hölderlin in comparison with that of poems by Wallace Stevens or Shakespeare. Such sensibilities happen in architectural forms, linguistic styles, and environments largely undisturbed by people. In such sites different kinds of perceptiveness happen immediately as we come into their sway and respond with them in our various ways.

Sensible abilities can be historical as well as anonymous. We know from many genealogical studies, including Derrida's on the grammē and voice, that our dispositions are funded by a huge range of values, meanings, practices, and institutions whose lineages are as effective and affective in our manners of alertness as multiple senses are active in forming words. Words and senses function in lineages of practice, customs, institutions, and interpretations that belong to no one. They function by chance, transformation, forces and counter-forces. A region's disposition is a dynamic settlement in which elevation

and disposal seem to happen all the time. This dynamic gives leverage to particular complexes of feeling and reflection that are lost by mutations and transfers—lost, we might say, by pervasive changes of mind that no one effects and that the awareness of an entire region undergoes. Sometimes it only takes a drop of difference to change an environment's sensible disposition, such as when a window is added to a wall or one dash in a poem is changed. At other times it might take a traumatic event. Whatever, the effects and affects can be immediate as a sensible world seems to close in, grow distant, or blink out in another configuration. Add, for example, two or three pinches of Levinas to *Of Grammatology*, and you have a different sensibility in which an altered disclosure of the other begins to take shape.

You can see that I am suggesting that sensible awareness is not circumscribed by a representing subject, that there are dimensions of mood, affective tendency, attitude, and discernment that are not representational, and that sensibility is different from written texts. I am also suggesting that the operation of sensibilities and dispositions need not be located exclusively in individual subjects. They can be environmental—we can say that they can be ethnic if we hear in that word its connection to ethos and its overtone of a living place. And I have suggested that conflict, chance, and passage are as much a part of the web of a sensibility as settlement and establishment are. A sensibility often appears as the site of forces that will undo it. Like *histos* as Derrida explains it, a sensibility has the established and arranged quality of a disposition (a quality of uprightness) and has also the warp, woof, and web qualities that *histos* suggests. A sensibility can be at war within itself as its various directional forces take their oppositional courses and, as it were, vie for the power to define magisterially the settlement. No one is there doing that. It happens immediately among the differences of the *histos*-like and affective figurations of sensible discernments. And as the differencing takes place, inclinations and delimitations shift, consensus might well change, the directions and stimulants for motivation alter, perhaps something once vague is clearer and something once prominent falls from view. As when a new baby is born into a family, or you begin to live and think in a new country and language, or the World Trade Center crashes to the ground.

Sensible dispositions do not appear long to repeat themselves. I can intend the irony and play that happen in that generalized and quasi-transcendental statement about sensible dispositions in the present context. How else might I speak of the passage and pervasiveness of sensibilities instead of phrasing a general, universal-sounding statement? I suppose I might shift grounds and

attempt to describe the sensibility that has its immediate bearing in this paper, in the inclination toward the priority of difference instead of toward an enduring unity of identity, the emphasis on living events—on the *event* of representing, for example, and not on representations—the prioritizing of affections with awareness, the straying with rather more than from Derrida. The statement makes sense, seems to be accurate: sensible dispositions do not appear long to repeat themselves. You know and I know, however, that in a pharmacological context we have no choice but to read double if we are to read appropriately. And we doublers know that "appropriately" is already at play with "pharmacological" and that, given what I have said about *conflicts* in sensibility, we are already inclined to follow a *play* of conflicted differences to find the logos that *governs* "appropriately." You have sensed and I have sensed that sensibility is a strange kind of fund. It funds disposal as much as settling dispositions—Derrida likes the phrase, "graphic relations between the living and the dead." But I cannot say that here because I am not talking about graphic relations (although I am talking, strangely to my mind, by reading them). Instead of "funding relations between the living and the dead," I am inclined to write, "dispositions fund plays of transforming sensibilities." They fund detections, alertness, discernment, abilities to judge and decide according to standards. What kind of fund? One of affections, operating values, meanings. Funds of transformation, re-figuration, loss, and establishment. Of multiples, not polarities. Funding functional and dis-functional identities. Funding insubstantial difference. Funding many accuracies and fits, many losses and recoveries. Funding our alert lives.

Sensibilities and dispositions are so lively! They happen in encounters and engagements that vastly exceed our explanatory grasp. Usually they are happening well before we note them: we move with them in loving and hating, but in the smaller affections as well, in our slight preferences, in our desire to discover or to read the way we read or to think the way we think or to drink Italian red wine. Sensibility and disposition give porosity to our established convictions and definitive communities. Written or customary expressions seem never to exhaust them. Sensibility and disposition simply come to pass in writings and expressions. They happen in the intensities and minor connections that define our ways of life and give them to disintegrate, leaving us often with an inclination to ask why? when something decisive falls from presence. Derrida's phrase is "supplementary thread" (67). The funding of sensible dispositions is like a supplement but not like a thread. It broadly pervades our clarity and knowledge. If its funding is kin to a bank, it is like a bank that

tilts toward a bordering ground, that follows a curve, or that constitutes "a piled-up mass" that disperses more like clouds than like a foundation.[8] The supplement of sensibility enlivens, locates and dislocates, adds and drops immediately. It is something like a pharmacy for lives without Ammon-Ra or Thoth. Or even a father.

Returning to Homes without Fathers: *Fonds sans fond*

Ethos. Dwelling place. An accustomed place. A place of customs. A dispositional site where there are mores. Home place. Homer speaks of the ethos of sows where they return in the evening after a day of foraging and of a horse's ethos to where he runs after escaping his captors. The word suggests an appropriate place to which something living belongs.

In Derrida's text writing is not a proper home for authoritative, dominating lords, or if writing is the lord's dwelling place, it is proper for him to die. There *is* a moment of uncertainty on this point, however, when Derrida considers the rigor and laws of writing. They are dominant and almost lordly. While the articulate father finds his grave in writing, certain laws of sense and connection persist enough to give a predisposition in writing to both obedience and deviation. In the father-lord's absence the laws seem to carry immediate… should I avoid the phrase immediate *authority* and say, instead, immediate *force*? It makes only a slight difference to me, but in the context of preoccupation with the father of logos, it seems significant to say, as it were, 'authority' in Derrida's writing. In any case, I suppose that Derrida is never more immediately obedient and disobedient than when he writes difference with an *a* and then plays out a solicitation of grammatical authority in an unresolved conflict of propriety and impropriety. In that play he is certainly obedient to writing's pharmacology, although he appears in that obedience in the father's absence; and that is a major point: writing for Derrida provides a fatherless dwelling place with violable… he says: "laws," and I will take that to mean vigorous mores—violable and vigorous mores. His descriptive claim, as I am repeating it, is that writing provides a place where the custom is for father figures to have to die. That would appear to be an unwritten law. A very special more. A key aspect of writing's morality. Very pharmacological.

Grammatical laws as well as those of acceptable style provide a strong disposition for writing. They appear as both authoritative and mutable, both

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[8] See, for example, the definition of the noun *bank* in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 9th ed.

resistant to chance and subject to it. In Derrida's careful thought, these mores make a difference, and making a difference, they are subject to the *pharmakon* they describe. Mortal stability. The fatherless customs of the place.

"Fatherless" here suggests the absence of an effective transcendental signifier, the triumph of the pharmacy, no one privileged author or council of them for the definitive elements of a writing. Dispositionally speaking, undecidability is already decided. That too happens pharmacologically.

We found one sense of "fatherless" as we followed the dissolution of a commanding voice in writing. Another kind of "fatherless" begins to happen when people convert their father's voices, rules, and expectations into an "inner voice" of rules and expectations, as though it were their own. One finds oneself fatherless when that one voice comes to fail as the one, when people speak their own minds with their uncountable desires, persona, lineages, and conflicts, when people own (not authorize) their sensibilities and themselves as the sites of those sensibilities. Then they may come to their dispositional pharmacies as their places of belonging. They are able to exist without *the* father, without any *the* father. That is not written. Or said. Existing without the father might take place, for example, as people begin again with no need to decapitate kings or do what a father dictates, as they find what will suffice for their lives under the circumstances, as they learn ways of living through differences without a requirement of mastery, and as they learn the art of extending themselves by force of play (65). My guess is that in *that* instance, Derrida's pharmacological texts will meet a welcoming disposition, as though something unwritten found a homeland in writing. The fatherless might in this case discover a sameness, a pharmacological ethos, an odd paradigm of written and unwritten relations among the living, a home without a father.

"The *pharmakon*" can name descriptively, I believe, living processes that have an abundance of senses and feelings, that are inclined to unsubstantial and unstable lives, and that are morally suitable for the dispossessed. For thus it is written: "The *pharmakon is* the movement, the locus, and the play; (the production of) difference. It *is* the *différance* of difference. It *holds* in reserve, in its undecided shadow and vigil, the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out. Contradictions and pairs of opposites are lifted from the bottom of this diacritical, deferring reserve.... It is from this fund that dialectics draws its philosophemes. The *pharmakon*, without being anything in itself, always *exceeds* them in constituting their bottomless fund (*fonds sans fond*). It *keeps* itself forever in reserve even though it has no fundamental profundity or ultimate locality.... It *is* also this store of deep background that we are calling the *pharmacy*" (127–28; emphasis on verbs added).

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Heidegger's Heraclitean Comedy[1]

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Abstract
"Heidegger" and "comedy" are words that one seldom finds conjoined. However, in his 1943 Summer Freiburg lecture course entitled "***Der Anfang des abendländischen Denkens. Heraklit***," the word "*komisch*" occurs significantly, it is regarded as superior to "*das Tragische*," and thus can open up a new vista onto Heideggerian thought. In this paper, I discuss Heidegger's interpretive translation of Heraclitus' Fragment 123: Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ. I attempt to show how Heidegger distinguishes his translation and interpretation from other great thinkers and other ways of thought, and how this distinction ultimately unfolds into that unlikeliest and untimeliest of beings, a uniquely comic Heidegger.

Keywords
Heidegger, Heraclitus, comedy, tragedy, interpretation

Introduction

In *Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*, Dennis Schmidt makes the following stimulating observation: "In the end, the full treatment of the relation of tragedy and philosophy… needs to address the place of comedy in that relation. Both Hegel and Nietzsche will acknowledge this—if only marginally—while in Heidegger and Hölderlin one finds only a remarkable absence even of the word."[2] The general sentiment concerning the absence of a direct engagement with comedy in Heidegger's thought is correct. Further, Schmidt calls important attention to a neglected aspect of contemporary

[1] An earlier version of this paper, entitled "Heidegger and Comedy: An Initiating Investigation," was presented at the 2005 Annual North American Heidegger Conference at Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland, convened by John Rose. I offer profound thanks to Lawrence J. Hatab, whose comments helped strengthen the paper.

[2] Dennis Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2001), 19.

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philosophy. But in a strictly literal sense the observation is not entirely accurate. In his 1943 Summer Freiburg lecture course entitled "***Der Anfang des abendländischen Denkens. Heraklit***," the word "*komisch*"[3] appears twice. The first occurs as a mere commonplace. The second, however, opens up a new vista onto Heideggerian thought.

(1) Relatively early in the text, in a general and apparently harmless passage, we find: "We would ourselves make a representation that is indeed comical [*eine recht komische Vorstellung*] of thinkers if we opined that everywhere they could think error-free." The context provides the insight that, despite whatever errors an original thinker makes, it is given to him "to think the Same and only the Same in the highest purity as what has been 'already thought' by the earlier thinker."[4] The words "*recht komisch*" merely indicate the obvious folly of expecting thoroughgoing flawlessness.

(2) The second passage, which occurs later, constitutes the provocation for this paper. It resounds far differently in both the style and the content from what is presented in the entirety of the rest of the course, which quantitatively consists of 177 pages of notes. It occurs within Heidegger's protracted exegesis of Heraclitean Fragment 123: Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ. Together with its more immediate context, it reads as follows:

> Alles 'Wesen' ist im Wahrheit bildlos. Zu Unrecht fassen wir dies als einen Mangel. Wir vergessen dabei, daß das Bildlose und also Unanschauliche allem Bildhaften erst den Grund und die Notwendingkeit gibt. Was vermöchte aber auch ein Maler, der nicht stets und zuvor weiter sieht und über das hinweg, was Farben und Striche zu geben Vermögen, zu malen? Alles Anschauliche ist ohne das Unanschauliche, das es zu schauen geben soll, nur ein Augenreiz. *Der immer gellendere Schrei nach 'Anschaulichkeit' verliert bereits das Komische und geht nachgerade dazu über, das Zeichen des Tragischen zu werden, d.h. als eines Willens, der, indem er sich selbst will, einzig nur gegen sich will und sich zuwiderhandelt und dabei sich sogar 'logisch' vorkommt*.[5] (emphasis mine)
>
> [All "essence" is imageless in truth. We grasp this incorrectly as a lack. In so doing we forget that the imageless and unintuitable first give the ground and the necessity to everything imaged. What could a painter, who did not see further and beyond what is given by colors and lines, be able to paint? Without the unintuitable everything intuitable that is to be

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3) I will put all German words in italics (there are no italics in Heidegger's text). The title of the course is the only passage in bold italics.

4) Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit*, vol. 55 of Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), 41–42. Hereafter cited as *GA* 55, followed by page. All translations of this volume are mine.

5) *GA* 55: 137.

> given to intuition is only a stimulation of the eye. *The ever more ringing cry for "intuitability" has already lost the comic and has directly gone over to becoming a sign of the tragic, i.e. of a will that, insofar as it wills itself, can only will against itself and act in opposition to itself and come forth itself, along with this, "logically."*]

Questions regarding this passage abound. In what sense do the unintuitable and the comic stand together? How are they so intimately bound together that the cry for intuitability (which Heidegger understands in the general Kantian sense as "given through sensation" or "immediately given") has already lost the comic? How has the cry for intuitability directly gone over to being a sign of the tragic? Are the comic and the tragic in a relation such that they exclude one another? What is revealed in Heidegger's interpretation of tragedy as the will's willing itself in willing against itself? How does such willing result in the will's coming forth "logically?"[6] Still more basically, why is the appeal to intuitability a ringing cry rather than a quieter call?

And finally: does Heidegger here affirm that thought involves an appropriation to the *comic*? This oracular passage seems to gesture strongly in that direction, if not to indicate this stance quite pointedly.

Before answering these questions, I propose to set the context of this passage within Heidegger's project of interpreting Φύσις κρύπεσθαι φιλεῖ within the core of the Heraclitus interpretation he offers in this course. Accordingly, in the first part of this paper I will treat some of Heidegger's arguments concerning translation, in which he distinguishes the specific task of a thoughtful translation of Heraclitus from a philological and/or a metaphysically oriented one. In this course, Heidegger regards philologists and metaphysicians (even great ones such as Hegel) with far more disdain that usual. They are presented more as blunderers than as people operating under the sway of the necessary forgetfulness of being. The section will culminate in a comparison of several "competing" translations, with an explanation and defense of Heidegger's. This method is intended to make Heidegger's preparatory approach quite clear.

In the second part, I will study the translation closely, endeavoring to expose the bond between φύσις, κρύπτεσθαι, and φιλεῖ in terms of Heidegger's direct interpretation.

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[6] I leave aside the interesting question of how "the logical" results from the will's willing itself, for this paper is concerned primarily with the comic. As a preliminary answer, I might suggest that the logical law of noncontradiction is an evasion and a surrogate for an encounter of the will with its own willing.

The third part will consist of a digression on the *Timaeus* of Plato. In his Plato- interpretations, Heidegger has sometimes demonstrated a tendency to read his own view of Plato as the one who posited the ἰδέα, one of the (if not the) first metaphysical notions that led Western thought on its *Irrweg*. In so doing, he often missed both the play of the Platonic dialogues,[7] as well as some fairly straightforward structural components, such as the conclusion of many dialogues (especially the *Republic*) with rich mythical material and no reference to the ideas whatsoever. However, he did glimpse the importance of one of the most radical "notions" ("non-notions") of all, the χώρα in the *Timaeus*. The Platonic χώρα receives some insightful attention in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

In this section, I will propose a close kinship between the Platonic χώρα and Heidegger's discussion of the "imageless" and the "unintuitable" in the passage under consideration. This kinship, together with the translation of Fragment 123, will prepare the way for my conclusions on Heidegger's Heraclitean comedy.

I

Schmidt cites Heidegger appositely: "Tell me what you think about translation, and I'll tell you who you are."[8] Note that there can be no settling of the question as to who is "correct" or even "more faithful" to Heraclitus' Greek, for both of these notions presuppose the very image/original distinction that is set at issue here. Heidegger has read the matter thusly: one cannot treat Heraclitus as a "past" author whose words can be replaced by our own contemporary, supposedly more sophisticated, concepts. Rather, as belonging to the founding sayings of Western thought, the Fragments of Heraclitus must be followed closely, slowly, and carefully in order to hear what is sounded in these words. "It is 'assumed' however [*Gesetzt aber*] that the initiating [*Anfängliche*] reigns over all things that follow from it [*alle seine Folgen*] and stands beyond and ahead of them, because the initiating is nothing that lies behind us, but rather the One and Same [*sondern das Eine und Selbe*] that comes

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7) *The Play of the Platonic Dialogues* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), my second book, attempted to exhibit the playfulness of the dialogues as integral to their philosophizing and their philosophy. See esp. 130–32 on Heidegger's Plato-interpretation.

8) Schmidt, op. cit., 255; *GA* 55: 76.

before us and towards us in a mysterious [*geheimnisvolle*] turn."[9] Heidegger speaks in this course under the silent power of this turn, and regards both his predecessors and his opponents from the space opened up by the turn.

Heidegger gives first consideration to Nietzsche. The discussion of Nietzsche's thought occurs earlier than the sections treated in this paper, but this discussion shadows the rest of the course's and this paper's more text-bound material. Readers of Heidegger will recognize his identification of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician, his reading of the will to power as the Being of beings in its final metaphysical form, and most importantly for the discussion here, that Nietzsche's questioning "can only be a precursory knowing."[10]

It is not Nietzsche's historical task, according to Heidegger, to attend to a "mysterious turn" but to be the last thinker to think the Being of beings *before* the turn. In Nietzsche's "active" or "classical" nihilism, "there is nothing more that could be either concealed or not concealed from the human beings, because the human being itself has become supreme-judge [*Gerichtsherr*] over what appears, and as appearing what 'is' and what is not."[11] Here Heidegger's Nietzsche-interpretation must be placed in the context of the discourse on Heraclitus.[12] Nietzsche's own early treatment of Heraclitus declares that the

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9) *GA* 55: 43. Heidegger's "*Kehre*," the turn from thought issuing from the *Daseinsanalytik* to thought issuing from *Sein* itself is now so well known that it is in danger of becoming a commonplace. As Risser has pointed out in his excellent introduction to his edited volume entitled *Heidegger toward the Turn* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), the turn "is not a matter of abandoning the standpoint of Dasein in order to take up the standpoint of being itself," (2), but indicates a complex matter of articulation. For purposes of this paper, it is enough to interpret the turn as indicating that the founding saying of Heraclitus provides the space for the interpretation, rather than any direct reference to Dasein.

10) *GA* 55: 108. This is, to say the least, a remarkable saying in the summer of 1944, with Germany in ruins. The earlier part of this sentence reads: "We do not speak of history [*Historie*] with supplemental morally beneficial application and with allusions to present conditions, but rather. . . ." Thus, the saying is entirely consistent with Heidegger's thought from the beginning. He will also appeal to the "ruin" as the provocation for the German task of appropriating the initiating thinking of Being as it occurs in the everyday '*ist*', and as thought follows the path back to its origin in the saying of Heraclitus. In light, however, of 1944 from another shore, one must be grateful to writers such as Schmidt, Sallis, Krell, and others for teaching English to speak German and Greek.

11) *GA* 55: 67.

12) While I freely grant its controversial nature, this is not the place to comment upon Heidegger's Nietzsche-interpretation.

latter "altogether denies being"[13] and likens this view to Schopenhauer's. While Heidegger expresses his contempt for Schopenhauer on many occasions during the lecture course[14] and surely disagrees with Nietzsche on the interpretation of Heraclitus, Nietzsche does not serve as a foil as do the dialecticians, logicians, metaphysicians, and "everyday people" but, rather, serves as the final thinker of the West who, in denying Being, drives metaphysics to its limit and so allows the *Seinsfrage* to come forth again in its originariness.

Who are the dialecticians in relation to Heraclitus? They are the ones who discern in Heraclitus an early and thoroughly genuine but undeveloped sense of the (Hegelian) Concept. They will translate Heraclitus according to this understanding, an understanding that places the Fragments of Heraclitus as subordinate to the Hegelian project of interpreting history as the toilsome self-unfolding of reason.

Who are the philologists in relation to Heraclitus? They are the ones who wish to preserve his words (a practice that deserves and receives praise), but who translate these words into their modern equivalents. Heidegger refers to Diels, who provides the best philological source. English readers have Kirk, Raven, and Schofield upon whom to rely.

What about the logicians? Logicians attempt to put the sayings of Heraclitus into acceptable propositional form. This includes Hegel as well, but also and primarily the much more thoughtless ones who are blind to their own presuppositions. And Nietzsche, the last metaphysician, discerns the onset of his own metaphysics in Heraclitus and translates him accordingly, denying "being" altogether in favor of *will*.

Near the beginning of the section entitled "The 'Contradiction' of Arising and Sinking" ("*Der 'Widerspruch' von Aufgehen und Untergehen*") and before his critique of logical, dialectical, and philological translations of Fragment 123, Heidegger offers his own:

> Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.
>
> "Das Aufgehen dem Sichverbergen schenkt's die Gunst."[15]

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13) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. M. Cowan (Chicago: Gateway, 1962), 51.

14) For example: "Schopenhauer, who became the undoing of Nietzsche, has proven through his irresponsible insults [*maßlose Geschimpfe*] concerning Schelling and Hegel and their lack of clarity that he is no thinker.…" (*GA* 55: 20).

15) *GA* 55: 110.

Heidegger took care to place his German words directly beneath and in the same order as the Greek of Heraclitus. If I were to attempt to do the same for Heidegger's German, it would read something like the following:

> "The Arising, to the Self-concealing, the Beneficent gives."

In more common English usage, one might recast it as: "The Beneficent sends the Arising to the Self-Concealing." Much unpacking is required in order to enter into both this translation and the Greek that it would translate, and Heidegger begins this task by ruling out inappropriate pathways. The Heideggerian translation might seem to say that Arising and Self-concealing (sinking) are contradictory (and conversely), along the lines of saying "the light is the darkness."[16] However, Hegelian dialectic can easily handle such propositions. Far from worrying about them, "the self-contradicting is held precisely to be the 'true'."[17]

Hegel's doctrine of contradiction, however much it gives the appearance of depth (*Tiefsinn*), "belongs to the specifically modern thinking and is foreign to the initiating thinking of the Greeks."[18] This doctrine, one might say, is parasitical upon the "things that followed" (*Folgen*) or "results" of the initiating thinking and as such can neither measure up to the power of its origin nor so much as glimpse this origin as something that lies *ahead* for thought. To focus upon philosophy in the image of the owl of Minerva that paints its gray upon the gray that has already occurred is to overlook that which granted the clearing within which philosophy, owls, painting, images, and the λόγος that gathers them can occur at all. Or in Heidegger's words, "this way out in dialectic . . . , looked at from the standpoint of Heraclitus, remains precisely a way out, a flight and a cowardice of thinking, i.e., an evasion in the face of [*vor*] Being that lights itself here."[19]

Logic receives even greater contempt in this lecture course. In the same paragraph, Heidegger calls logic "an undesirable descendant" (*ein Abkömmling*)[20] of metaphysics, not to say "an abortion" (*Mißgeburt*). In case metaphysics itself is "a mishap [*Mißgeschick*] of Western thought," then logic would be

16) *GA* 55: 111.
17) *GA* 55: 112.
18) *GA* 55: 112.
19) *GA* 55: 112.
20) "*Abkömmling*" literally means just "descendant," but in this context I cannot help but also hear the adjective "*abkömmlich*," which means "unwanted."

"an abortion of an abortion."[21] From a logical point of view, Heidegger claims that if "the logical" were the true, then the saying of Heraclitus concerning nature would be false. More precisely, of course, his rendering of this saying into German would be false.

There seems to be nothing at all internally self-contradictory about the more "self-evident" (though, of course, it is hardly self-evident), literal translation, which coincides with its philological counterpart in most important ways. The Diels-Kranz edition translates Fragment 123 as "*Die Natur (das Wesen) liebt es sich zu verbergen*" [Nature loves to hide itself]. Bruno Snell offers "*Das Wesen der Dinge versteckt sich gern*" [The essence of things hides itself gladly]. Some blown-up pseudo-Heideggerian attempts "*Das Wesen des Seins liebt es, sich zu verbergen*" [The essence of being loves to conceal itself]. The literal translation, which Heidegger says everyone understands, is: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ—"*die Natur versteckt sich gern*."[22] In English, it is just as easy: "nature hides itself gladly" or "nature likes to hide itself." But as Heidegger points out in a straightforward historical argument, the understanding of φύσις as "nature" and of essence (*Wesen*) as beingness (οὐσια) occurs first of all in *Plato*, who came after Heraclitus and whose thought, according to the line of argument here, occurs *under the sway of* the initiating power of Heraclitus' sayings.[23]

The outcome of this section of the paper, and of this aspect of Heidegger's lecture course, is both negative and positive. Negatively, his contemptuous characterizations attempt to clear away any and all renderings of Heraclitean Fragment 123 that would read it as a straightforward proposition, a dialectical proposition, a logical proposition, or any kind of metaphysical proposition. Positively, he indicates "a mysterious turn" to which genuine thought must attend and give itself over, and reaffirms his own translation—which allows the Fragment to stand forth in all of its questionableness, all of its originary wonder. He ends the critical part with a restatement of the saying and his translation:

> φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.
>
> "*Das Aufgehen dem Sichverbergen schenkt's die Gunst.*"[24]

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21) *GA* 55: 112–13.

22) *GA* 55: 121–22.

23) Once again, I admit that Heidegger's Plato interpretation deserves much comment. But here is not the place to for it.

24) *GA* 55: 123.

II

Although Heidegger expressed disdain for the translations of the philologists (a disdain that is often reciprocated), it is clearly worth investigating not only the philological plausibility but also the soundness of Heidegger's readings. After all, many of them turn out to be better readings in every way than the standard ones, i.e., more philologically sound as well as more thoughtful. For example "man dwells in the neighborhood of the god" is far better in every way than "a man's character is his destiny."[25] Taking φύσις first, the primary meaning given in Liddell & Scott (a lexicon already under the sway of later, imposed interpretation) is "origin" or "birth." Readers of *Sein und Zeit* know well that Heidegger derives physis from φύω, "to bring or come forth"; φῶς, from φάος, "light," hence, to come to light. "Aufgehen" is therefore not only a philologically faithful rendering of φύσις, it is more faithful than "*Natur*" or "nature," which is only the secondary meaning.[26]

Κρύπτεσθαι is translated literally in both Heidegger's and the philological translations. Φιλεῖ as "*schenkt's die Gunst*" requires a thoughtful move that philology cannot rule out at all, yet for which it lacks the means to account. Attunement with the turn is required, releasing oneself away from mastering and determining toward hearing and following. A first literal reading of φιλεῖ would be "it loves," "it befriends," or "it welcomes with affection."[27] Grammatically speaking, φύσις is both the nominative and the accusative form of the noun (although grammar holds no authority in the interpretation of Heraclitus or of any genuine thinker).[28] Although, therefore, the nominative reading may seem more "natural," there is no rule that excludes Heidegger's reading of φύσις as accusative, of κρύπτεσθαι as a dative participle, and of φιλεῖ as the "grammatical" subject. But what exactly is the subject, the "it" of "it loves"? For Heidegger, it is the "befriending," the "loving," the welcoming itself that brings arising together with self-concealing. *Gunst*: grace, granting, favoring—this is how Heidegger's attention to the turn enables his hearing of the

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25) See "Letter on Humanism," trans. Capuzzi and Gray, in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 233–35. The customary translation, "A man's character is his daimon," is not even philologically preferable. Ἦθος indeed means, first of all, "an accustomed place" or "neighborhood," and δαιμῶν means, again first of all, "a god."

26) H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

27) Ibid. (1933).

28) See esp. *GA* 55: 54–62, where the relation of grammatical thinking to originary thinking is treated both with respect to Heraclitus, Aristotle, and to the *Seinsfrage*.

Greek of Heraclitus in Fragment 123, reading it into the German of the twentieth century, and in so doing setting a task for such hearing in the future.

Given the preparatory work done in earlier writings and lectures on φύσις that make the translation of "*Aufgehen*" accessible, and given the way this same work made thoughtful entry into κρύπτεσθαι less laborious for us today that might well have been laborious decades ago, the entry into *Gunst* (*gönnen*) provides the challenge of the translation to us. Heidegger writes:

> We understand grace in the sense of the originary [*ürsprungliche*] graciousness [*Gönnens*] and granting [*Gewährens*], thus not in the mere secondary meaning [*Nebenbedeutung*] of favoring ['*Begünstigen*']. . . . The originary grace is the granting of that which is due to others, insofar as belongs to its essence insofar as it bears its essence. Accordingly, friendship, φιλιᾶ, is the grace that graces the essence to the other . . . in the form that through this graciousness the other blossoms into his own freedom. In 'friendship' the reciprocally graced essences are liberated to themselves.[29]

However, this is far from saying that this granting is a bestowal of pure light. Nothing, of course, could be further from the thought of either Heidegger or of Heraclitus. What is granted in the granting is the field upon which not only all friendship, but all enmity, and indeed all appearance, becomes possible at all. A few pages later Heidegger discusses *die Gunst* as also granting ἔρις, originary strife: "Grace is the manner from which the countergrounding [*Rückgründung*] of the arising into the self-enclosing [*Sichverschließen*], but also the overtaking of the arising though the self-enclosing, but also the foregrounding of the self-enclosing concealing—all of these essence in the manner that they essence [*wesen, wie sie wesen*] . . . . Grace is not something for itself and outside the φύειν and κρύπτεσθαι, but has the way-of-essencing [*Wesensart*] of arising and self-enclosing."[30] Since the arising and the self-concealing belong to one another in a manner according to which they confront one another so that any being can appear at all, "grace is the fundamental feature of ἔρις, of strife, insofar as we think this in an initiating way and not represent it at once and only as the opposite—lack of grace, envy, dispute."[31]

So what can we conclude about Heidegger's translation of Fragment 123, and how might this conclusion prepare the way for a proposed Heraclitean comedy under Heidegger's guidance? The second section of this paper

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29) *GA* 55: 128.
30) *GA* 55: 133.
31) *GA* 55: 133.

suggested, correctly as it turns out, that Heidegger's translation is not propositional, at least not in any recognizable form. Even if we read Heidegger's understood "*schenkt's die Gunst*" as its grammatical "subject" and "verb," the relation between "*Aufgehen*" and "*Sichverbergen*" can hardly be meaningfully characterized as a grammatical relation between a "direct object" (*Aufgehen*) and "its" "indirect object" (*Sichverbergen*). Rather, the three words, when thoughtfully heard, belong so intimately to one single and unique thought that antecedes any and all grammar understood in any and all senses. Arising requires the self-concealing that has been granted; self-concealment is granted in order that that which arises can arise at all; the granting that is at once strife makes possible the play of arising and self-concealing.

"The play of the word . . . plays from the play of the essence itself that comes into its word."[32] Heidegger's translation of Heraclitus can be seen, then, as mirroring the originary play sounded in the saying of Fragment 123. Not only is this play as far as it can be from frivolity, on the one side, and propositional or sentential thought, on the other. It would be similarly mistaken (although perhaps less so) to call this play "poetic." "Play" does not equal comedy (much less tragedy) but, rather, thinks the field upon which anything like comedy and tragedy can occur for mortals at all. The translation, like the saying of Heraclitus, belongs to the domain of *initiating thinking*—a task set by Heraclitus, taken up by Heidegger, and remaining as a task for us. It remains yet to be seen how this play opens out onto the comic and the tragic.

III

Let us recall the key insight of the passage cited in the introduction to this paper: "All 'essence' is in truth imageless." The "imageless essence" that comes into the word, I suggest, recollects the Platonic χώρα of the *Timaeus*. The χώρα, also called "receptacle" and "nurse of becoming," has no features of its own. If it took on any characteristics by which it might be discerned, "it would show its own face [ὄψιν] as well" (*Tim.* 50e3–4). While Heidegger "blames" Plato for making possible the later, metaphysical interpretation of space as abstract and as extended,[33] he incisively notes that "the Greeks had no word for space"[34] and that "that wherein the things in process of becoming are

32) *GA* 55: 139.

33) See *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Manheim (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 55. Again, he cites the interpretation of Being as the ἰδέα as the culprit.

34) Ibid., 54.

placed must precisely not present an aspect or appearance of its own."[35] The receptacle is "apprehended by a kind of bastard reasoning [λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ] that does not involve sense perception, and is hardly even an object of belief (πιστόν)" (*Tim.* 52a9–b2) Clearly the apprehension of the receptacle occurs nowhere on the divided line. Since it is apprehended neither through intellect nor through sense, it is difficult to see how it can be gleaned at all.

"We look upon it as one occupied with a dream (πρός… ὀνειροπολοῦμεν βλέποντες), and say that everything which exists must be somewhere, in some place and occupying some space, and that which doesn't exist somewhere, whether on earth or in heaven, doesn't exist at all" (*Tim.* 52b3). A clash occurs even between the two parts of this sentence about the receptacle. In the first part, the receptacle is ascribed both to a dream and in the manner of a dream. It is denied connection with any conceptual structure. It is given no specific location and no definable way of existing. By contrast, the second part affirms a conceptually drawn principle that deduces its existence from the premise that that which does not exist somewhere does not exist at all. With a dreamy quasi-image and a deductive argument in the same sentence, no wonder Timaeus calls it bastard reasoning!

Might we not, however, along (if not wholly along) with Heidegger's remarks on the χώρα in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, interpret "bastard reasoning" as belonging to the "initiating thinking" of the kind undertaken by Heraclitus before Socrates and Plato began to philosophize? Might not the aforementioned "clash" within the sentence uttered by Timaeus and cited above also be read back as a result (*Folge*) of the reigning of what is thought in Heraclitean Fragment 123, which Heidegger reads as the granting of the play of arising and self-concealing, with the Platonic χώρα here apprehended by initiating thinking as the indeterminately playful granting of appearing?

On the view that the answer to the last two questions is "yes," I will bring the thoughts in this paper to a close.

Conclusion

Returning to those specific questions I raised in the Introduction, the one that is ready to be answered first is: Are the comic and the tragic in such a relation that they exclude one another? Following the pattern of Heidegger's thought

35) Ibid., 55.

in this course, we can confidently answer "No!" to this question. We have seen how arising and self-concealing belong essentially to one another. The comic and the tragic are ways in which mortals comport themselves in the face of this gift, such that the comic can pass over into the tragic and the tragic, which Heidegger here characterizes with the same words that he has characterized the *Irrweg* of metaphysics throughout this course, allows for the recovery of the comic. In terms of the Platonic χώρα, both comedy and tragedy are co-present as images of the way mortals live out their destinies, i.e., are images of the becoming of mortals. The comic and the tragic, then, clearly belong to human beings as possible ways of their self-showing. In this passage from the Heraclitus course of the summer of 1944, we find a glimmer of the relation of comedy, tragedy, and philosophy that Schmidt alluded to in the citation from this paper's opening paragraph.

Next: what is revealed in Heidegger's interpretation of tragedy as the will's willing against itself in willing itself? This pattern can be located in virtually every Greek tragedy. Perhaps Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is the clearest such play, but even Aeschylus' *Eumenides* occurs against a background of self- and familial ruin. In service to our question, however, we can say with equal confidence that in accord with Heidegger's text, the comic does *not* manifest itself in the will's willing against itself in willing itself. In the comic, then, either the will wills in accord with itself in willing itself, or the will does not will itself at all.

How, then, has the cry for intuitability directly gone over to be a sign of the tragic? The cry for intuitability—whether this is made in an everyday sense in which something has to be "seen to be believed," in crude media exposures of the "private lives" of "celebrities" of any kind, or presented in its more sophisticated forms such as positivism (in any of its guises) or applied science—is fundamentally a cry that "all things must be revealed!" This demand for the revelation of all things carries within it the seed of the destruction of the one, or ones, or people who make this demand—in other words, this demand is already a giving over to the tragic, to the perhaps noble but also fateful Oedipal desire for the unlimited, unmeasured uncovering that makes itself manifest everywhere in our world. Why is it an ever more ringing cry rather than a quieter call? Because to every appearing and every further appearing, to every "intuition" and every new intuition that appears to build upon its predecessor, self-concealment always belongs—there is always withdrawal, χώρα, self-withholding and concealment. So the demand to bring forth, to produce, can know no satiation.

In what sense do the intuitable and the comic stand together, such that once the cry for intuitability occurs, the comic is lost? I offer the following as halting and provisional thoughts: As neither the saying of Heraclitus nor the translation of this saying by Heidegger has anything to do with the self or the will at all, the comic—insofar as it can be said to involve willing—does not will itself at all. Rather than cry for intuitability, it quietly attends to the unintuitable, i.e., to that which allows the play of arising and self-concealment.

How is this *comic*? If one were to venture a historical clue, one might say that while both Greek comedy and tragedy were coming into their own at the time of Heraclitus, it is very likely that comedy is far older.[36] Comedy was rooted in the κῶμος, "a company of men behaving in a happy and festive manner."[37] The procession of the drunken singers predates comedy as a dramatic form (just as it predates tragedy) and shows an image of humanity that has given itself over entirely to what has been granted to it—the fruit of the earth and the song of joy in existence that it inspires. There is nothing further from the κῶμος than a desire for self-mastery or for mastery of any kind.

Heidegger locates Heraclitus as thinking under the care of the goddess Artemis, older twin sister of Apollo, born of Zeus and Leto, the virgin goddess, the goddess of the hunt. "Artemis is the goddess of arising, of light, of play. Her sign is the lyre, which appears in the shape of a bow, therefore in Greek it is the same as the bow."[38] Innocent yet clever, musical yet deadly, Artemis protects the thinker who thinks the play of nature as ἔρις. Those who attempt to master the play of nature pass over at once into the sign of the tragic. Those who do not—those who, to note a phrase employed by Heidegger in a later work, "will non-willing [*das Nicht-Wollen*]"[39]—remain under the sway of the thinker of the granting of arising to self-concealing, and the musical, deadly goddess of nature's ultimately comic play.

Two great German thinkers of comedy, Schiller and Hegel, both interpreted it "metaphysically" well before the turn. For Schiller, while tragedy had the more significant point, comedy had the higher and more significant purpose,

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36) *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Hornblower and Spawforth, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 367.

37) Ibid.

38) *GA* 55: 17.

39) Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Neske, 1959), 56: ('Lehrer: Wenn wir uns auf die Gelaßenheit zur Gegnet einlaßen, wollen wir nicht das Nicht-Wollen'.)

since within it all oppositions are ultimately reconciled.[40] For Hegel, comedy represents the shape whereby the individual consciousness achieves victory over fate and annuls all opposition.[41] Reversing their insights in terms of the turn, perhaps we can haltingly say that Heidegger's Heraclitean comedy consists in this: that the most powerful thought is neither the boldest nor the most effective but, rather, the most modest and "useless"—i.e., thought that restrains itself most in order to let the gift of φύσις κρύπτεσθαι be received with appropriate reticence.

[40] While tragedy's point is more significant, "comedy proceeds to a more significant purpose and it would, were it to attain it, render tragedy superfluous and impossible" (Friedrich Schiller, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime*, trans. Elias (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966), 121.

[41] "What this self-consciousness beholds is that whatever assumes the form of essentiality over against it, is itself dissolved within it. . . . This self-certainty is a state of spiritual well-being and of repose therein, such as not to be found anywhere outside of this Comedy" (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller [New York: Oxford University Press, 1977], 452–53, paragraph 749).

REVIEW ARTICLES

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Speaking of Language: On the Future of Hermeneutics

Dennis J. Schmidt. *Lyrical and Ethical Subjects: Essays on the Periphery of the Word, Freedom, and History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. xii + 215 pp.

Although many topics are addressed in Dennis Schmidt's book, *Lyrical and Ethical Subjects*, it is worth noting that, perhaps more than anything else, this is a book about hermeneutics. More precisely, it is a book that is profoundly concerned with the *future* of hermeneutics. In a series of reflections centered on exploring some of the ways that language encounters its limits, Schmidt seeks to open up new avenues by which hermeneutics might address itself to ethical and political matters.

The author is of course well aware that the kinds of questions customarily assigned to moral philosophy have not hitherto found much of a home in the hermeneutic tradition. However, his response to this state of affairs is clearly expressed near the start of chapter 6, "What We Cannot Say: On Language and Freedom," which I take to be a pivotal chapter for the book as a whole. There Schmidt writes, "While I confess that the questions of moral life have not been central to the tradition of hermeneutics, which has been more identified with the question of truth than of freedom, I nonetheless believe that in the future hermeneutics will come to be seen as marking an original achievement in the field of moral philosophy. My hope is to begin to open up avenues for this achievement to become more visible" (78). This is an important and much-needed contribution, inasmuch as hermeneutical thinking—roughly speaking, the tradition of thinking inaugurated by Heidegger and Gadamer—too often finds itself, in its preoccupation with questions of texts and of truth, distant from what Schmidt calls our "shared life in time." In particular, Schmidt argues, there is a pressing need at the current historical juncture for a renewed commitment to the consideration of the question of freedom, especially one that is informed by hermeneutical insights concerning the phenomenon of language. Schmidt acknowledges that doing this, especially when combined with the further step of addressing the question of nature, amounts to responding to Heidegger's call for an "original ethic" (119). If one accepts the claim that freedom presents itself above all in the word,

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particularly the poetic word, one can reasonably hope that by following the pathways opened up by a hermeneutic account of language—which is to say an account that stresses the finitude of language, and indeed regards that finitude as the summit, not the liability, of the possibilities of the word—it may be possible to begin to take the measure of human freedom in a way that avoids the aporias in which metaphysical and humanistic or subjectivistic accounts of freedom have become entangled. This is what Schmidt means at the end of chapter 6 when he writes, "Speech, rather than being the ground of the formation of the universal claim of law, is the preeminent form of the practice of the singularity of freedom.... With the word, freedom is set loose in the world" (87).

A small disclaimer: In what follows I make no attempt to give equal time to each of the chapters. I have chosen instead to focus on those chapters which seem to me to establish the main line, or central thread, of the argument. My hope is that this approach might reflect to some extent what I consider to be one of the real virtues (but also risks) of this book, namely, its selectiveness in seeking to cut directly to the heart of the issues which animate it. Such an approach lends a sense of altitude to the argument, a sense of moving in thin air from mountaintop to mountaintop. Of course, this approach is also more likely to disappoint skeptical readers, who may well need more convincing than this book provides. But for those already sympathetic to the project's presuppositions, the results are exciting and invigorating.

To begin with, the introduction, while brief, does a good job of imparting a sense of unity to the proceedings, linking the essays collected here by virtue of their common concern with the various ways we experience "the fringes of language" (1). The purpose for this is expressed as follows: "My contention is that when we arrive at experiences that press up against the unsayable, we find ourselves *claimed* by what, for lack of a better word, we might call an intuition.... It is the intuition of *freedom*" (1). It is in the need to confront and renew this sense of freedom—not, to be sure, the freedom of an agent subject but rather the "abyssal freedom" that "lets something like a subject emerge at all" (1)—that Schmidt finds our most urgent ethical and political tasks to lie. The common thread at work here is that such an appreciation of freedom, sensitive to its full scope and "originality" for ethical life, is best approached by reflecting on the finitude of human being—especially as disclosed by the tensions and struggles of language when pressed to its limits.

Chapter 1, "Lyrical and Ethical Subjects: Straining Communicability," investigates the *Critique of Judgment*, locating the source of what Schmidt dubs the "lyrical subject" in Kant's account of aesthetic experience. This "apo-

retic subject" is, in Kant's phrase, "quickened" and brought to life in us by virtue of the experience of judgments of taste. Confronted by beauty, especially natural beauty, Kant argues that we are brought to an experience that is, as Schmidt emphasizes, "completely independent of the concept" (13). Indeed, so strange is this experience that it is not enough to call it "nonconceptual"; instead, Schmidt refers to it as a "secret"—by which he does not mean something that is withheld, but rather that which essentially withholds *itself*, that which *cannot* be told (13–14). Aesthetic experience, in other words, contains something that cannot be communicated directly, something that calls for language and yet refuses it at the same time. The most important expression of this dilemma of communication for Kant is found in the notion of the symbol. Schmidt's rich discussion of the symbol in Kant forms the culmination of this chapter. Perhaps the most crucial point is that the symbol names the manner in which the "secret" of aesthetic experience becomes manifest. Yet, as Schmidt insists, what is occasioned by the symbol is not at all a direct representation; the secret is not so much revealed as intimated. What is decisive about the symbol is that it has a certain density that cannot be replaced; "its truth is found rather in its intransitive residue, which can never fully appear and never be overcome or sublated into a concept" (16). This insight is repeated, but in a much more generalized form, at the end of chapter 6, when Schmidt connects the symbol to the word: "The finitude of the word, like that of the symbol, is found in the capacity of the word to unfold itself beyond the boundaries of the thinkable and of what is present without itself disappearing *as* word" (88). In addition, the symbol is "natural," in the sense that it comes to us unbidden—it is not the result of artifice or convention. As Schmidt observes, this accounts for Kant's deep appreciation of such unassuming things as blades of grass, maggots, and birdsong, but it also indicates how we ourselves can be changed by the experience of nature. In this experience of radical alterity, our own finitude is disclosed to us, such that there is the aforementioned "'quickening' of an ethical sense" (17). It is the sense of subjectivity arising from this experience that Schmidt names "lyrical."

The argument of chapter 2, "Wozu Hermeneutik?: On Poetry and the Political," concerns the "original kinship" of poetry and the political (19). Schmidt contends that poetic practice has a crucial role to play in the formation of a living political space, a community that can remain "alive and responsive to its sources" (30). To be sure, poetry's contribution to the polis does entail, as Plato saw clearly, substantial risk for the status quo inasmuch as the work of mimesis is radically destabilizing, anarchic. And yet for this very reason, as Heidegger and Gadamer recognize (but Plato, perhaps, does not),

poetry is vital for the polis. For in the end it is not stability that is achieved by the exile of the poets, but something more like petrification.

Chapter 3, "Between the Lines: On Language, Translation, and Tradition," develops further this notion of the negative, destabilizing element of language and offers perhaps the most far-reaching reflections to be found here on the nature of language itself. The central concern of this important chapter is to explore the tension within language between the unique and the universal, between sound and sense, and to do so in terms of the "impossible intersection" of poetry and translation (36). Schmidt begins by citing Gadamer's remark that "the ideal of poetic practice fulfills itself in untranslatability."[1] While the task of poetry is to "return language to its body" (34)—that is, to its sound, its voice, its carnality—the task of translation runs in the opposite direction, seeking to open language "to the point of passage and universality" (34). Hence, "while poetry stands as the pinnacle of the experience of the finitude of language, of its opacity and resistance, translation must be seen as the experience of the mediation possible in language, of its porosity and expansive character" (35). In other words, translation is the site of mediation, of the "living exchange" between languages that marks the entrance of history into the question of language. But if we arrive here at the "most Hegelian moment in Gadamer"—namely, the notion of the fusion of horizons—Schmidt is intent on reminding us that, as Gadamer himself holds, mediation always remains finite, limited by that "dissonance [that] is the real secret of every harmony" (36). In the end the point is that, because no translation is perfect, all language maintains an "essential relation" to poetry (36). Hence all language has something about it of untranslatability, or silence. Schmidt's question, then, aims at this site of dissonance, this failure of mediation that yields up the silence at the heart of language, and asks, "How does this silence work in the conversation that comes to define history and tradition?" (37) The answer is actually quite simple: the silence inherent in language is testimony to the dispute of language, with itself, the "struggle of language coming to word" (39). But if this is true, then the language that forms history cannot but effect a silence there as well. As Schmidt emphasizes, "*Every formation of tradition in language necessarily includes a certain marginalization in silence*" (44). But if the task put to us by language is in part to learn to hear its silences, then it can perhaps also be said that "history and tradition must be read and written

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[1] "Kultur und das Wort," in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Lob der Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), 23, quoted in Schmidt, 34.

as an effort to bring to voice those who have none" (44). This is not a metaphysical imperative, Schmidt cautions, but simply a matter of listening to language *as* language. Returning to Plato, Schmidt concludes that "language experienced and thought as language in its particularity and density, at the site of its crossings with other languages, shows itself as destabilizing the margins of history and culture" (44–45).

Chapter 4, "On Blank Pages, Storms, and Other Images of History: Speaking and Imagining History," details further the relation between language and history. Several figures are addressed in this chapter, but perhaps the most important are Hölderlin and Benjamin, both of whom see that history, like language, is marked by the irremediable workings of severance, departure, dissonance, rupture. Speaking of Benjamin's famous interpretation of the Klee painting, *Angelus Novus*, Schmidt writes, "The 'storms' of history happen because the past, present, and future do not 'rhyme', because they are discordant" (58).

Chapter 5, "Time Made Loud: On Language and Music," begins a sequence of chapters, which I will touch upon only briefly, aimed at addressing the relation between language and some of its more specific limiting factors. Music, for example, as Nietzsche clearly grasped, entails a different relationship to time, and hence to the dissonance that enables harmony, than that which can be found in our experience of grammatically determined language. As Schmidt puts it, "Dissonance can never be made obedient to grammar" (75). Pain, on the other hand, is one of the chief ways in which speech may be pressured to the point at which perhaps only silence can be spoken, as Schmidt suggests in chapter 7, "'Two Mouthfuls of Silence': On Language and Pain," which is a reading of the work of Celan. A consideration of sign language in chapter 8, "On the Dark Side of the Moon: On Language and Deafness," provokes the unusual question, "when is the word?" (105). The suggestion is that perhaps neither speech nor writing can be adequately taken to "define the original form of the word *as* word" (105). Rather, by embodying a possibility of the word other than verbal speech or written script, sign language points out the epiphenomenality of both. The conclusion is that our reflections on the word demand an ever-renewed vigilance about the prejudices we bring to them. Finally, chapters 10 ("Words on Paper: On Language and Script") and 11 ("'Like a Fire That Consumes All before It': On Language and Image") explore what can be learned by considering the iconographic potential of language.

Needless to say, I have done little more than provide labels for the chapters mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Their rich and thought-provoking

contents must await the reader's own investigation. However, in the space that remains, I would like to speak in just a bit more detail about the two chapters I have not yet mentioned. First of all, it is clear that the future of hermeneutics, at least as Schmidt envisions it, will be greatly concerned with the question of nature. In chapter 9, "Speaking of Nature: On Language and the Unbidden World," Schmidt outlines the stakes of this question in conjunction with a reading of Hölderlin's *The Death of Empedocles*. As we have seen, the hermeneutic focus on language traces a trajectory that leads through the work of art, especially poetry, into a region of ethical concerns centered on the question of freedom. But what we find here is that this trajectory finds its ultimate destination not simply in the question of freedom but in the relation of freedom to an "even larger question," namely, that of nature (118). And we also learn that, far from being left behind, the aesthetic dimension of this set of concerns remains at the forefront inasmuch as the experience of nature necessarily demands that it be presented in the form of a tragedy. The crucial moment comes when Schmidt identifies Hölderlin's contribution as the insight that "freedom, the true horizon of ethical life, *is not defined by the realm of the human*" (121). Centering his remarks about *The Death of Empedocles* on Empedocles' long soliloquy, a lover's lament directed at nature itself, Schmidt asks why Empedocles comes to speak of his own words, the poetic words he uses to celebrate and lovingly embrace nature, as being like "sacrificial blood gladly shed." The reason language becomes sacrifice is that it effects a double work: On the one hand, the word lets the unity of nature appear, but on the other hand, this word at the same time requires that the poet separate himself from nature. Empedocles thus displays the tragedy of the human relation to nature because he "suffers from his love, that is, from his speculative longing for unity" (124). And the resolution of this tragedy is that the poet must fall silent—in Hölderlin's tragedy, Empedocles commits suicide. Schmidt's detailed discussion of this work is difficult to summarize, but his comments move in the direction of an understanding of nature as the horizon of freedom *from out of which* human being emerges *into* an experience of limits, of "being at the threshold," which Schmidt suggests is "the properly human experience" (125).

Chapter 12, "Language in the Age of Modern Technicity: Speaking of Freedom and Community Once Again," offers a remarkable and fitting conclusion to the book. In this chapter, which is by far the longest in the book, Schmidt gives a reading of Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie* that must be congratulated first of all for the degree of clarity it brings to discussing such a notoriously difficult and opaque text. Throughout the chapter, Schmidt carefully

draws forth the manner in which Heidegger dissects the impact of modern technicity on language in the present age. What is perhaps most noteworthy about Schmidt's reading is the strong insistence that *Beiträge* is fundamentally engaged with questions of political life, despite Heidegger's own disavowal of the term "politics." In defending this reading, Schmidt ultimately presents *Beiträge* as in many respects a kind of fulfillment or embodiment of the line of thinking developed in the preceding chapters of his book. Indeed, it is remarkable how many of the themes already set forth in the context of other figures and works (*Beiträge* is hardly mentioned until this final chapter) are prominently echoed here, almost as if the entire book were a preparation for this reading.

Let me just give a few examples of what I mean, which will also serve as a kind of summary of both the chapter and the book. First, Schmidt begins with the claim that "everything for Heidegger comes to be a matter of language" (163). Thinking the relation of language to modern technicity is merely a way of taking the force of history seriously: it is to acknowledge that *this* is the pressing question that has been put before *us*. Second, Schmidt points out that Heidegger's conception of political life is "genuinely, rigorously, beyond good and evil" (168)—a claim Schmidt makes for his own reflections in the introduction (4). No normative grounds are relied upon in the critique of *Machenschaft*; no "values" are "posited" to enable a calculation of right and wrong. The furthest extreme of this stance is reflected in Schmidt's remark that Heidegger does not judge the violence of the war and the annihilation camps "from the perspective of a humanism that finds them evil. Rather he sees them as epiphenomenal events that expose the destiny of Western metaphysics" (179). This is strong medicine for those who, like so many today, do not even "know how to ask about political and ethical life without setting up and positing values" (168). But it is consistent with the recalibration, or better yet, the *de*calibration, of ethics that Schmidt is calling for in this book. Third, Schmidt reads *Beiträge* as asking about the possibility of freedom. The question is: what sort of relation to language is required in the present age if the space of appearance is to become hospitable to the emergence of human freedom? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Schmidt follows the concern with freedom through the critique of *Machenschaft* into a call for a more original relation to nature, or *physis*. Keyed to renewed reflection on the origin of the work of art, which shatters the paradigm of making founded on the metaphysics of the idea, and to the transformation of the human subject into the porosity, the openness, of Da-sein, this more original relation to *physis* would ultimately be the affirmation of finitude that makes community possible. Near the end of the

chapter, Schmidt explains Heidegger's praise of Sophocles as the "true thinker of the *polis* in the ancient world" by saying that in tragedy, "*community is revealed as that which exposes, rather than sublates, the finitude of its members*" (189). Perhaps more than anything else, then, the task that is laid out in this book for the future of hermeneutics is to continue to think and hold fast to this finitude, which is, in the end, the finitude of the word as it pertains to the possible appearance of nature, freedom, and community.

In conclusion, *Lyrical and Ethical Subjects* is a highly thought-provoking book that forges a coherent vision of the future of hermeneutical thinking from out of an original engagement with a wide range of thinkers. As indicated, its aim is more to open avenues of thought than to actively pursue them, although the comparatively close reading of *Beiträge* in the final chapter does take some steps in this regard. While this may prove frustrating to some readers, this is nevertheless a work of great insight and depth that deserves careful consideration.

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Ethical Foundations of Ontology

Walter Brogan. *Aristotle and Heidegger: The Twofoldness of Being*. Albany: State University of New York, 2005. 211 pp.

Walter Brogan's book *Aristotle and Heidegger: The Twofoldness of Being* is an insightful analysis of the decisive impact Aristotle had on the development of Heidegger's thinking. At the same time it also is a work of philosophy in its own right that uses Heidegger and Aristotle as the occasion to reflect on the nature of phenomenological method. In this review I will trace some of the major moments in Brogan's book, focusing on his account of the twofoldness of being and then on the implications of this account for philosophical method.

In chapter 1, "Martin Heidegger's Relationship to Aristotle," Brogan presents philosophy as the artful practice of renewing shared meaning that becomes uprooted by overfamiliarity. Just as meaning shared in friendships and community must be renewed every so often, so too philosophy must return to the origin in which it is nourished. Brogan holds this view of Aristotle's treatment of his predecessors; it is "not merely a preliminary investigation, but a philosophical way of recovering and discovering the questions that motivate his [Aristotle's] own project" (6). Brogan understands philosophy as a project that only discovers itself through direct engagement with the living tradition. Brogan's analysis of Aristotle's influence on Heidegger is a welcome occasion to rethink what we today understand to be philosophy.

The book is organized around central themes in Heidegger's encounter with Aristotle, focusing on issues of special interest leading up to, and in some sense motivating, *Being and Time*. In chapter 2, "The Doubling of *Phusis*: Aristotle's View of Nature," Brogan takes particular interest in Heidegger's critique of the systematic errors into which the interpretation of being falls, correcting those errors by engaging Aristotle's account of *phusis*, specifically the phenomenon of motion at the core of that account. Opposing the given tendency to interpret being according to the measure of constant presence, Heidegger presents instead the temporally inflected notion of "presencing." As Heidegger writes in the 1939 article "Vom Wesen und Begriff der *Phusis*: Aristoteles' *Physik* BI," "What is meant (by *phusis* and thus by *ousia*) is . . . presencing (*Anwesung*) in the sense of coming-forth in the unconcealed and placing itself in the open."[1] This is a philosophy rooted in the nature of phenomena,

[1] Heidegger, "Vom Wesen und Begriff der *Phusis*: Aristoteles' *Physik* B1," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1967), 342; cited in Brogan, 81.

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drawing its interpretation rigorously from the way in which beings show themselves. As Brogan writes, motion is "the fundamental horizon of… philosophical questioning" (21) because philosophy begins with what shows itself foremost, i.e., what is manifest in the locomotion and life of animals, in the moveability, fragility, and durability of things, and crucially in the very way things show themselves and dissimulate. From the rigorous commitment to the study of *phusis* as the horizon for the interpretation of being, Heidegger fashions one of the most powerful critiques of dualist ontology available in the Western tradition.

I am identifying as "dualist" those interpretations of being that impose the logic of their interpretation on the very phenomena that they are trying to explain. The notion of constant presence, for instance, rightly draws on the Parmenidean insight that being must be one, but it falsely construes the unity of being in such a way that multiplicity (especially change and motion) are ruled out. The interpretation immediately betrays the insight on which it is based. When we say "being is one," we seem to me to be pointing out the way we cannot get outside or around being. Everything toward which we can direct our attention, reflect back on, or recollect must be. The dualist turn here betrays the phenomenal basis of its own insight by taking being to be one thing with no other. That is, it takes being to be something, and addresses being *per impossibile* from the outside. The unity of being is thus construed to be "not-many," i.e., opposed to anything that can be characterized as many, installing a relationship of exclusion between being and nonbeing. Heidegger claims that this exclusion is symptomatic of a deeper error: "something ontic is made to underlie the ontological," which rests on "a failure to master the fundamental problem of being."[2] Aristotle's account of motion can be used as a resource for correcting the error of dualist interpretation insofar as this account shows the way in which deprivation and lack are intrinsic to being, or in other words it shows the way in which unity need not exclude difference.

A second dualist error, diametrically opposed to the first, depends equally on a failure to understand the "not" that is intrinsic to being. The process seems to be something like the following: noticing that all conclusions are drawn from singular phenomena, and noticing that the singularity of phenomena is inexorably betrayed by what is said about them, the conclusion is drawn that being must be many rather than one. In other words, whereas the previous interpretation of being says only "unity" to the exclusion of multi-

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[2] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1972), 94; cited in Brogan, 49.

plicity, this view sees division everywhere. Most famously this takes the form of substance metaphysics in which reality is made up of individual things, which is most directly critiqued in chapter 3, "The Destructuring of the Tradition."

In chapter 3 the ongoing analysis of motion matures into a discussion of genesis, which is taken up as a type of motion that more immediately contains nonbeing and contradiction within itself. In the process of this analysis, Brogan uses Aristotle's account of matter to show that what is most manifest about beings is not their separate substantiality but the point at which they are co-implicated. "A being is necessarily, and that is to say always (in a way that is constitutive to its being), in a relation with other beings that it encounters" (91). The Aristotelian account of matter pays special attention to the spaces between things, i.e., the limits at which they are drawn into contact. As Heidegger writes in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, beings come to a stand in their limit: "coming to a stand means therefore: to achieve limit, to limit itself."[3] At this limit, things are co-implicated in each other and open onto a relational horizon where they have access to their being; Brogan describes limits as "the way of being of beings" (63). We might say with Aristotle that the sphere of animal motion is characterized by pursuit and flight for precisely this reason, that bodies exist in and through their limits, where they are joined with (i.e., pursuit) and divided from (i.e., flight) other bodies.

Chapter 4, "The Force of Being," picks up from the deeper account of motion offered by the study of genesis in chapter 3 to address Heidegger's 1931 lecture course on *Metaphysics* Θ, 1–3, consolidating the twofold as an account of being to which deprivation and lack intrinsically belong. Specifically the account of *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* Θ provides a notion of thinghood as that which does not exclude other beings indifferently but, to the contrary, exists as directed toward other beings alongside which it strives to achieve its own "what it is." In this view, beings "are" insofar as they gather their way of being to themselves and direct themselves toward that being. Beings are at work. This means: they cannot fail to express their being, in a sense they are constantly expressing nothing but their being. Simultaneously beings are always failing to capture the entirety of their being. Being-at-work is the ongoing process of doing nothing but expressing being and falling short, leaving more to be expressed. The notion of *dunamis* best reflects the way beings are constitutively more than themselves, just as a runner preparing to

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[3] Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 46; cited in Brogan, 65.

start a race is not simply at rest, i.e., is not simply not moving, but is resting in such way that her rest is a plenitude of motion. The relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* more adequately reveals the twofoldness of being insofar as it better shows this "not" that is intrinsic to being, i.e., the way that opposites are bound up intimately in mutual belonging together.

What I find most remarkable about Brogan's analysis is his fidelity to the insights in which his project is rooted. Brogan takes philosophy to be of and for the situation from which it arises: "all philosophical research, and Aristotle is seen as paradigmatic, remains attuned to the life situation out of which and for the sake of which it is inquiring" (12). What marks out both Aristotle and Heidegger as two of the most significant contributors to the philosophical tradition is their concerted effort to reveal the ethical foundations of theoretical wisdom. Key to this is the relationship between the self-showing of beings and the place of reception in which this self-showing is housed and without which such self-showing would not be possible. All beings desire to show themselves on their own terms and give rise to the context in which their self-showing can dwell. The theoretical perspective is unique as the one stance that accommodates other desiring projects. By adopting a serious stance as human beings, we gain access not only to beings as they ask to be seen but also, thereby, to ourselves.

The ethical foundation of theoretical wisdom occurs in the way we submit ourselves to the self-showing of beings and, in return, renew the possibilities hidden in the excess of our origin. As Brogan writes, "human perception has a peculiar directedness toward beings that is twofold, that also holds itself back from beings and recognizes them in their otherness, that is, in their own being as such" (136). In Chapter 5, entitled "Heidegger and Aristotle: An Ontology of Human Dasein," Brogan specifies this as the power of *sophia* in distinction from *phronesis*:

> *Phronesis* is the revealing of human being whereas *sophia* is the kind of thinking and disclosing that arises out of the possibility of a kinship between thinking and being, a kinship that is open to human being as a possibility, but does not arise out of human being itself. In *theoria*, the otherness of being, the holding and retaining of the being as such in its being, is preserved. (171)

Human beings are within the twofold of being and beings in an especially responsive way: whereas other beings are at work striving to express their being in the limited ways they are able, human beings are oriented toward the excess of being itself, giving voice to nothing else and always falling short.

This account of the theoretical stance corresponds nicely to the methodological starting point from which our philosophical study began. We as human beings must work to gather ourselves into an open stance expressing in openness our being-exceeded by being, and this project is just the meaning of ethical seriousness. When we turn to Aristotle, we too are enacting a mode of dwelling among things, providing the space in which beings disclose themselves as the beings they are. Intellectual virtue is an enactment of *nous* as a potentiality of human Dasein: "the original togetherness in which the human being dwells is named by Parmenides, and later by Aristotle, as *noein*" (67). For Brogan, *nous* is an active condition of human beings for the most basic reason that "a being can show itself as it is in itself only for a being whose being is such as to be open to grasp the being in the simplicity of a view (*noein*) that has previously gathered the being together and let it be seen as a whole" (101). It is here in this stance that the most beautiful possibility, i.e., the possibility of self-showing of beings in general, is safeguarded. This safeguarding of the self-showing of beings is what we today have come to call phenomenology.

If there were one aspect of Brogan's book that could be more fully developed, I think it would be to give a more systematic account of the errors into which interpretations of being fall. Brogan does a nice job of articulating many of the fallen perspectives that guide our everyday concernful absorption in the world, but perhaps for strategic reasons they are not tied together. For instance, there are many suggestions that the interpretation in terms of constant presence responds directly to a fear of mortality that is written into the very nature of human existential condition, but no structured presentation of these connections is attempted. In the spirit of dialogue we might venture a link between the errant interpretations of being as constant presence and familiar human practices of provisioning, institutionalized in the Greek world and afterward in the Western tradition. This type of provisioning with a view to constant presence is reminiscent of the work that Aristotle describes as "being serious about living" rather than being serious about "living well" in the *Politics* (1.9.1257b40–41), and this stance might also be linked to suggestive comments Brogan makes about the Megarian reduction of *dunamis* to "appropriation and the power of domination" (134). Provisioning and domination both seem wrapped up in a fear of mortality to the extent that the project of securing oneself has appropriate limits that can be exceeded or even completely ignored. Brogan strongly suggests these connections without making them explicit.

I make these comments in order to suggest an alternative understanding of fallenness than perhaps Heidegger himself sets forth. There are fallen stances

addressed by Heidegger that seem to be simply fallen, i.e., they do not possess so much as the limited truth proper to a particular field of effort or stage of education. In my view it is worth wondering whether the very same attitude that is false from a more phenomenologically sophisticated perspective is nontheless true on its own terms. For instance, in his discussions of the history of philosophy, Brogan says that one finds in Aristotle "the remains of a pre-metaphysical, primordially Greek, phenomenological sense of being" (22). This view takes metaphysics to be something opposed to phenomenology and separable from it. It seems more true to say that all the important errors to which dualistic thinking falls prey are resources for thinking and education, albeit limited, and they persist because we tacitly rely on them even in spite of ourselves. To suggest without qualification that they are a falling away from truth seems to me to depart from the Greek sense of education.

Of course these are much less concerns about Brogan's book than questions engendered by a close and rewarding reading of this first-rate book. Community and friendship are renewed by our ongoing care, and what goes explicitly by the name "philosophy" is just one way in which this care announces itself. This view of the way shared situations are fragile and call for safekeeping reflects the way human beings are not in direct, secure possession of themselves but know themselves only through steadfast commitment to the sources of meaning and resolute awareness of our own limits. The point is that we are constituted by things that we do not explicitly understand, and the phenomenological method of doing philosophy is an attempt to make explicit our experientially rooted wisdom as a basis for renewing the bonds of community. Brogan's book begins with an analysis of the phenomenological and hermeneutic roots of philosophy and ends with an analysis of friendship, which are to my mind the proper foundations for philosophical insight. Brogan successfully shows that philosophy occurs within a shared situation that is fragile, at stake, and available to be won or lost in response to the way we inhabit that situation.

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